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ABSTRACT

In the Parish of Clarendon in Jamaica, about 10 percent of infants are born to teenage mothers. Between 1986 and 1996, over 500 young mothers and their children participated in the Teenage Mothers Programme (TMP). The TMP took an approach that encompassed the development of the young women, stimulation and care for the infants, support in the home, and contacts with the infants' fathers. Ten of the mothers who had participated in the early years of the TMP were traced in 1999, and they and their children were interviewed, as were a matched comparison group of another 10 mothers and children who had not been in the program. In addition, a focus group interview was conducted with the 10 TMP participants to gain additional information on the positive features of the TMP and suggestions for improvement. The findings provided solid evidence of the positive effects of the TMP. All the former program mothers were employed, most had undertaken post-school training, and their children were mostly ranked above average by their teachers. In contrast, the comparison group's employment rate was much lower, and their children were mostly ranked below average to average by their teachers. The mothers in the comparison group had given birth to more than twice as many infants than mothers in the program group over the same period. (Three appendices summarize the focus group interviews; contain the study questionnaire for mothers, teachers, and children; and summarize previous research on the Teenage Mothers Programme.) (KB)

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# Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections

*A tracer study of the Teenage Mothers Project, Jamaica*

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Bernard van Leer Foundation

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The mission of the Bernard van Leer Foundation is to enhance opportunities for children 0-8 years, growing up in circumstances of social and economic disadvantage.

The objective is to develop children's innate potential to the greatest extent possible. We concentrate on children 0-8 years because research findings have demonstrated that interventions in the early years of childhood are most effective in yielding lasting benefits to children and society.

We accomplish our mission through two interconnected strategies:

- a grant-making programme in 40 countries aimed at developing contextually appropriate approaches to early childhood care and development; and

- the sharing of knowledge and know-how in the domain of early childhood development that primarily draws on the experiences generated by the projects that the Foundation supports, with the aim of informing and influencing policy and practice.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation was established in 1949. Its income is derived from the bequest of Bernard van Leer, a Dutch industrialist and philanthropist, who lived from 1883 to 1958. Bernard van Leer was the founder of the Royal Packaging Industries Van Leer.

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# A new direction

*A tracer study of the Teenage Mothers Project, Jamaica*

June 2001

reports of studies tracing the 'footsteps' of former participants in early childhood programmes

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*Following Footsteps* are reports of efforts to trace former participants of early childhood projects and programmes. They are studies that follow the progress of the children, their families, the workers, the communities or the organisations five or more years down the line to find out how they are faring. Some of the programmes were originally supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, others were not. Some of the studies were commissioned by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, while others were not. Each of the programmes studied is unique, and the methods used for tracing, gathering data and analysing are many and varied. As a whole, the studies will contribute to our understanding of the effects, and effectiveness, of early childhood programmes.

*Following Footsteps* is a sub series of *Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections*. The series as a whole addresses issues of importance to practitioners, policy makers and academics concerned with meeting the educational and developmental needs of disadvantaged children in developing and industrial societies. Contributions to this series are welcomed. They can be drawn from theory or practice, and can be a maximum of 30,000 words. Information about contributing to the series can be obtained from Joanna Bouma, Series Editor, Department of Programme Documentation and Communication at the address given on the back cover.

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# *Foreword*

Children having children: about one in every 10 babies in the Parish of Clarendon in Jamaica is born to a teenage mother–many of them between 12 and 15 years old. Few of these babies have thechance of achieving their full potential, but between 1986 and 1996, some 500 young mothers and their children were given that chance. This study shows just what a difference that can make.

This is the first report of a tracer study to be published by the Bernard van Leer Foundation and it is fitting that it should be from Jamaica. The association between the two is almost synonymous with the Foundation's interest in early childhood development. The first ever, long term early childhood project to be supported by the Foundation began in Jamaica in 1966. That first project, curriculum development and teacher training for Jamaica's unique system of Basic Schools for 4 to 6 year olds, led to a series of further projects and a focus on the youngest children and the roots of poverty and deprivation. This led to the establishment of the Teenage Mothers Project.

The Teenage Mothers Project (TMP) was based in the small town of May Pen and took an all-embracing approach that encompassed the development of the young women, stimulation and care for the babies, support in the home and contacts with the babies' fathers. Ten of the mothers who had participated in the early years of the TMP were traced in 1999, and they and their children were interviewed, as were a matched comparison group of another 10 mothers and children who had not been in the programme.

This absorbing report of the findings of this study gives us an insight into the lives of these 20 families and provides solid evidence of the very positive effects of the TMP. All the former programme mothers are employed, most have undertaken post-school training and their children are mostly ranked above average by their teachers. This is in contrast to the comparison group, whose employment rate is much lower and whose children are mostly ranked below average to average by their teachers. The mothers in the comparison group have given birth to more than twice as many babies than the programme group over the same period.

These are important findings that raise many questions about the quality of care and support given to young mothers and their children in general - how is it that young women from similar backgrounds and with similar experiences have such very different approaches to life a decade after the birth of their children? The intensive programme

for the TMP mothers lasted around 18 months and concentrated on helping the young women – aged between 12 and 17 – to develop themselves intellectually, academically, socially and vocationally, as well as encouraging their bonding with their child. It worked with the families of the young mothers and it provided stimulating care for the babies.

Would attention to only the young mothers have made a difference? Would the provision of a stimulating and nurturing day care environment, alone, have made a difference to their children? Would only working with the parents and families of the young mothers have made a difference? Yes, we can assume that any of these forms of intervention, on their own, would have led to some improvements in the lives of the mothers and their children. But we can also make the leap and conclude that it was the combination of these actions that led to the very marked differences found between the TMP mothers and children and their counterparts in the comparison group.

## The tracer studies

The early childhood interventions supported by the Foundation are action projects that are implemented by locally based partners in 'the field'. Their objectives are concerned with developing and improving the lives of children and their families and communities in the here and now, based on the hypothesis that this will lay the foundations for improved opportunities in the future. These projects have not been conceived or implemented as research studies in which children/families have been randomly assigned to 'treatment' or 'control' groups, and they have not usually been subjected to tests or other research instruments.

Evidence exists on the longer term effects of early childhood interventions, much of it coming from longitudinal studies that have been implemented as research projects in industrialised countries. The outcomes are mixed, although usually fairly positive. Other evidence, mostly anecdotal, is available from early childhood projects such as those supported by the Foundation, and again, this is mostly positive.

After more than 30 years of support for field projects, the Foundation decided in 1998 to commission a number of studies that would trace former participants of projects to find out how they were faring a minimum of five years after they had left the programme. Although evaluation has been a major element in early childhood programmes supported by the Foundation, we have never, until now, gone back to find out how people are doing a number of years later.

Other similar studies are taking place, or have been completed, in countries as widely spread as Botswana and Kenya, Israel and India, the USA and Honduras, Ireland, Colombia and Trinidad. Each of the programmes studied is different in its target group, in its context, and in its strategies. This means that the methods used to trace former participants and discover their current status are almost as varied as the original programmes. We are emphasising an anthropological and qualitative approach, using small samples of former participants and, where possible, matching them with individuals/families that share similar characteristics for the purpose of comparison.

Our intention is to share the results of the individual studies with as wide an audience as possible, as well as to undertake an analysis of a group of the studies to see what lessons can be learned in terms of both outcomes and methods.

We anticipate that each study report will be a source of learning and reflection in its own context and country as well as for a wider public. As a whole, we hope that these exercises in following footsteps will contribute to a better understanding of the effects, and effectiveness, of early childhood programmes.



*Ruth N Cohen*
Bernard van Leer Foundation

## Acknowledgements

The research team would like to express their appreciation to:

Ten Jamaican women, former participants of the Teenage Mothers Project, Clarendon, who shared their life stories in the most sensitive and intimate detail;

Ten Jamaican women who had never benefited from the Teenage Mothers Project but who nevertheless shared many details of their lives;

Eighteen Jamaican teachers who gave time in a pressured work day to talk about the progress of their students;

Twenty Jamaican children who talked to 'di lady' about their lives because they were asked to by their mothers;

One woman in the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the Netherlands – Ruth Cohen who was always available to give advice, support and guidance;

Four committed and hardworking Jamaican women who made this research possible, facilitating its progress every step of the way, and who continue to serve the people of Clarendon with remarkable dedication and love – Joyce Jarrett, Utealia Burrell, Yvonne Osborne and Eda Golding.

My gratitude to all sixty-three, and to so many others for their time and effort!


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# *Executive summary*

This Tracer Study assessed the impact of the Teenage Mothers Project (TMP) on a sample of the mothers and children who were participants between 1986 and 1989. It was conducted for the Rural Family Support Organization of Clarendon, Jamaica, through funding from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation. Through the use of qualitative/ethnographic and quantitative research methodologies, including interviews, questionnaire administration and attitudinal scales developed at the University of the West Indies, Jamaica, the study explored the quality of life, attitudes and experiences of 10 mothers and their children in 1999. The study compared the TMP participants to 10 'comparison group' mothers and their children, five of whom had been the 'controls' at the time the McCarthy Scale of Children Abilities (MSCA) was administered in 1989.

Findings revealed significant distinctions in educational achievement and vocational attainment between TMP and comparison group mothers, and marked differences in the school performance of the children from the respective groups. Furthermore, data revealed that TMP mothers had less than half the number of children their comparison peers produced in the same 10 year period. They also had higher Achievement Motivation, higher Assertiveness and lower Alienation levels than their peers.

The sample findings are indicative of the impact that the TMP intervention had on the lives of the 500 teenage mothers it served in the period from 1986 through 1996, in developing their resilience following the birth of their first child and arresting a negative life trend. In addition to reconfirming the earlier MSCA research, the study also supported the position that interventions that promote parenting education, strong mother-child bonding and early stimulation can have long term positive developmental impact on the child aged 0-3 years.

# *Background and introduction*

Jamaica is a developing country with a comparatively high level of teenage pregnancy. Clarendon, the third largest parish in Jamaica, has a population of 211,447 people (Census 1991), and approximately 53,000 people reside in and around its capital town, May Pen. Teenage pregnancies continue to be a problem across the island of Jamaica, and no less so in Clarendon and its adjoining parishes. Poverty, low self-esteem, inadequate parental support and insufficient school-based guidance counselling all have an impact on the psychosocial development of the parish's teenagers, and early pregnancies are common. Misinformation about sex is prevalent among teenagers and contributes to the figures of approximately one teenage pregnancy in every 10 births in the parish. Many of these teenage mothers are between 12 and 15 years of age and are poorly prepared for the task of parenting. In ever-growing numbers, the teenage mothers add to the ranks of the poor in Jamaican society in which single parent families abound, putting their offspring at risk.

Internationally, in recent years a great deal of interest and research has been conducted to study the immediate and long term impact of adolescent parenthood on both the mother and the child. A longitudinal study in New Zealand (Fergusson and Woodward, 1999)[1] explored the relationships between maternal age (at birth) and psychosocial outcomes at 18 years in a birth cohort of 1,025 children. *Resiliency in Adolescent Mothers*, a North American study (Wolin and Wolin, 1998)[2], used ethnographic interviews to assess the academic success, attitudinal and coping behaviours of a group of teenage mothers. In the Caribbean, Russell-Brown (1997)[3] studied the economic and social conditions of 46 teenage mothers and their children who were born at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Barbados.

## The Teenage Mothers Project (TMP)

Twelve years ago, the problem of teenage pregnancy among poor young women in the rural parishes of Jamaica was targeted through a project launched by the University of the West Indies, Mona. Titled the 'Teenage Mothers Project' (TMP), young women at risk of dropping out of the school system because of early pregnancies were provided with education, counselling and child care support services, providing them with the opportunity of a better future. This project was funded with support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation of the Netherlands.

Over the 10 year period between 1986 and 1996, the Teenage Mothers Project sought to:

- decrease the number and frequency of teenage pregnancies in and around Clarendon;

- address the development and training of the teenage mother;

- lessen the likelihood of repeat pregnancies, thereby improving the life chances of the young child.

The young mothers/mothers-to-be who attended the centre were assisted in completing their schooling, developing marketable skills and learning to be better parents. During these sessions, their babies were in a stimulating, nurturing, daycare environment supervised by caregivers who were trained by the project. This daycare unit had been established at the centre to provide early childhood care for the children of teenage mothers. The unit also sought to reverse the pattern that led to the continuation of the problem of teen pregnancy by having the children reared in a climate designed to give them a feeling of security and self-worth.



Criteria for inclusion in the TMP were that the teenager had dropped out of school, that she was living with her family and that she was pregnant before reaching her 17th birthday. A full intervention lasted approximately 18 months, including the pregnancy and a two month break for the birth because the program did not accept babies under six weeks of age. Participants ranged in age from 12 to 16 years at the time they joined, had varied academic backgrounds (ranging from only Primary to High School) and differed in their backgrounds (helpful or unhelpful parents, violence, abuse) and basic needs.

Initially, some girls who were cohabiting with their baby's father were included, but according to Joyce Jarrett (former Director of TMP and now Director of the Rural Family Support Organisation), '*The girls acted very differently and didn't fit in the group.*' Thus it was decided after the first few months to accept only participants who were living with family members. Staff believed that, for the program to be effective, the teenagers needed support in their own homes – an area in which much effort was invested.

By 1996, when the 10 year period of funding by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation ended, approximately 500 teenage mothers and their children had benefited from the programme. Between 1986 and 1996, a project to address the needs of teenage mothers had developed into an enriched Teenage Mothers Programme, a Male Adolescent Programme and a Roving Caregivers Programme, all of which address the needs of poor rural youth from birth to 19 years.

## The Rural Family Support Organization (RuFamSo)

Combined, these essential programmes and services gave birth to the Rural Family Support Organization (RuFamSo), an umbrella organisation servicing the needs of poor rural families situated in the parishes of Clarendon, Manchester, St. Catherine and, to a lesser extent,

St. Elizabeth. RuFamSo is a registered company limited by guarantee under Jamaican law and has received wide support from the immediate community as well as further afield. The mission of RuFamSo is:

*to undertake child care training programmes for families and caregivers, and to provide guidance and counselling to male and female adolescents in Jamaica's rural communities, so as to ensure that the critical years of the child's development are not left to chance, and to help adolescents cope with their sexuality and acquire the appropriate education and training, nutrition and personal health care so that they will be able to secure marketable skills, enjoy a strengthened family base and the best possible quality of life.*

## Research and evaluation of TMP impact

Since its inception in 1986, the Teenage Mothers Project had a research and evaluation component. The children of the teenage mothers were 'matched' with a child born at the same time to a very young mother from a similar socio–economic background, but not enrolled at the Centre. The 'matching babies' formed the control group for the initial research. In 1989, a three year comparative study commenced among the Centre babies and those in the matching group, using the McCarthy Scale of Children Abilities (MSCA) which is described as 'among the best available broad-based diagnostic instruments for use with pre-school children'[4] with 18 individual scales that assess the verbal, perceptual, quantitative, motor and memory competences of the young.



## Jamaica

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By 1991, the study revealed that the TMP babies had consistently higher scores than those of the matching group. Retesting in the following year confirmed the higher levels of verbal, cognitive and perceptual performance of the daycare cohort compared with the matching group.

The research findings have been unequivocal in reflecting the positive impact that an informed mother and a stimulating and caring environment can have on the young Jamaican child. (A summary of the research findings can be found in Appendix 3.)

## The RuFamSo tracer study

Twelve years have passed since the first teenage mothers enrolled in the TMP, where they began the education programme especially tailored to meet their needs and their babies were provided with a programme of sound nutrition and early stimulation.

Economic difficulties in the island over this period have led to a decline in living standards which has meant that more Jamaicans are living below the poverty line than in previous decades. Many are also finding it more difficult to secure

employment as private and public sectors are both downsizing.

The unemployment statistics for women in Jamaica are still more than double that of men (Labour Force Survey),[5] and are most acute in the 15 to 25 years age group. Notwithstanding a modest decline in the number of live births over the period 1980 to 1989 (Registrar General's Department, 1997), the National Family Planning Board has reported a slight decrease in the national incidence of teenage pregnancies among Jamaican women.

Internationally, longitudinal studies of the impact of early childhood interventions on young children have presented a variety of findings, some of which have assessed the impact to be most positive. Other studies have indicated that the quality of the early intervention is a major determinant of long term effects.

This study will present how RuFamSo, which has maintained a relationship with many of the project mothers from the earliest days, conducted research to explore the impact of the TMP on both mother and child after one decade.

## Tracer study research objectives

The research *objective* of the RuFamSo Tracer Study was to assess the impact of the Teenage Mothers Project on the original sample of mothers and their children who participated in the project between 1986 and 1989. The study sought to examine the lives of 10 of the original project mothers and 10 of the original mothers of matched babies with a view to comparing aspects of the quality of their lives today: educational achievements, vocational attainments and nature of personal, family and community life. The children of these mothers have been studied to compare the parent-child relationship, school performance and individual development with that of 10 matched children.

In the original studies, the children of the comparison group were studied at school; their mothers were not included in the study and, in fact, were not aware of it. It was hoped that including the control group mothers in the Tracer Study would provide additional insights into the impact of the TMP on the young women who participated.



## Research methodology, strategy and approach

The research methodology relied heavily on a qualitative strategy to gather information about the TMP Mothers and the comparison group. Quantitative analysis of data was also combined with the qualitative strategy to yield a valuable mix of findings. Specifically, comparative analysis of TMP and comparison samples was conducted using the following approaches:

- questionnaires, developed and administered by the researcher to 20 mothers, which sought responses to

the status of education and training, current family and community relations, current employment situation, career plans and aspirations, personal attitudes and achievements. Interviews on a one-to-one basis with 20 mothers explored distinctions in perceptions and attitudes, life choices and experiences, and social and emotional concerns;

- an assessment of the Internal-External Locus of Control, Assertiveness and Alienation;

- interviews with 20 children and their primary caregivers where appropriate, which identified distinctions in their relationships with their mothers, primary caregivers and siblings, and assessed their social skills and self-confidence;

- an assessment of the physical, social, and emotional development of the children;

- school visits with the Primary School teachers of these 20 children to assess differences in school performance and conduct between the TMP and comparison groups;

- observations of the 20 children and their mothers in the home environment in all situations where this was possible, appropriate and convenient to the family, to assess the quality of life and the parent-child relationship (in instances where the mother and child were living apart, efforts were made to visit both in their current domicile);

- a Focus group organized with the TMP mothers to discuss the common findings of the study and to share the lessons of their experience, exploring suggestions and recommendations for future programmes of a related nature.

The proposed research time frame involved sample identification and selection and instrumentation in January 1999, interviews and data collection (including Focus Groups) between February and August 1999, and report preparation between September and October 1999.

This report presents, from an ethnographic perspective, the stories of 10 mothers and their children who were part of the Teenage Mothers Project and 10 who were not, with a quantitative comparison of selected variables in both samples. The report concludes with a summary of the identified weaknesses and strengths of the project with recommendations for the future of this and similar projects.

1 Fergusson DM and Woodward LJ (1999) 'Maternal age and educational and psychosocial outcomes in early adulthood' in ***Journal of child psychology & psychiatry & allied disciplines*** Vol. 40 No. 3, Mar 1999, pp. 479–489; ISSN 0021–9630.

2 Wolin S and Wolin S (1998) 'Commentary on resilient adolescent mothers: Ethnographic interviews' in ***Families, systems & health*** Vol. 16 No. 4, Winter 1998, pp. 365–366. See also Carey G, Ratliff D and Lyle RR (1998) 'Resilient adolescent mothers: Ethnographic interviews' in ***Families, systems & health*** Vol. 16 No. 4, Winter 1998, pp. 347–364.

3 Russell-Brown PA (1997) 'Child shifting: A survival strategy for teenage mothers' in ***Caribbean families: Diversity among ethnic groups***, Roopmarine JL and Brown J; Ablex Publishing Corporation.

4 Paget KD (1985) 'Review of McCarthy scales of children's abilities' in ***Ninth mental measurement yearbook***, Vol. 1. Page 992.

5 'Labour force survey' in ***Pocket book of statistics 1997***; Statistical Institute of Jamaica.

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# Chapter two

# *Design and conduct of the study*

## Questionnaire design

The design and development of the questionnaires were undertaken during January 1999. The questionnaire content sought to obtain information concerning each mother's schooling, further education, religious affiliation, employment, current economic status, family relationships, relationship with her child/children, and the difficulties and challenges of motherhood. The mother's questionnaire specifically sought to answer the following questions:

- How have the mothers changed and what have they made of their lives?
- Have they all pursued further education and training?
- Are they employed?
- Have any of them married?
- What is the nature of their relationship with their child today?
- Have they had other children?
- Are their lives any different to the lives of other teenage mothers who were not part of the TMP intervention?

The questionnaire concluded with an attitudinal scale to assess the level of Internal–External Locus of Control, Assertiveness and Alienation in the mother. This short scale was compiled from a selection of items from locally administered attitudinal scales in two doctoral studies done at the University of the West Indies, which had researched these variables in Jamaica (Johnson, 1993; Sinanan, 1980)[6].

The children's questionnaire explored schooling; the relationship that the children had with their mothers; their health status; relationships with their siblings, friends at school and home; hobbies and interests; and their future career aspirations.



The concluding sheet of the children's questionnaire was directed at the children's teachers and sought to obtain feedback from each teacher on the overall school performance and level of academic achievement of the child in comparison to their peers, as well as the teacher's opinion of the child's social interactions and behaviour at school. The children's questionnaire specifically sought to answer the following questions:

- How have the TMP children developed?
- Are they well adjusted children, socially and emotionally?
- Now pre-teens, some entering Secondary and All Age Schools, how have they been performing in school?

- Do they live with their mothers?
- What is the nature of their relationship with their mothers?
- Does their mother influence their lives?
- Is their mother the principal care provider?
- Do they display behaviour that is noticeably different from that of their comparison group peers?
- Has the marked difference noted in the early research between the children exposed to the TMP daycare programme and the comparison group babies been sustained?



## The 'Jury-testing' process

Draft copies of both questionnaires were circulated to the RuFamSo project director, centre manager and two project officers, all of whom had been on staff at the time of the TMP project and knew the participants and several of the comparison group mothers and their children. The researcher met with these officers at their Clarendon office at the end of January 1999 and discussed their suggestions and recommendations for changes to the content, format and wording of the questionnaire.

The agreed final draft was copied and prepared for administering. (Copies of the questionnaires are included in the Appendices.)

## Sample selection

### TMP participants

A tremendous effort was made by the present RuFamSo staff to identify members of the original target group who had participated in the project between 1986 and 1989 and whose children had been tested in the 1989-1991 'Teens Children's Study', which was the intention of the Tracer Study sample strategy. The RuFamSo staff compiled a list of 15 TMP participants who indicated their willingness to be part of the study. This list was submitted to the researcher in early February. The researcher then selected 10 participants from this list so that the final sample would be representative of the professional diversity of the participants in terms of their occupations.

Table 2.1 presents the final sample with their children. Names of Caribbean flowers, fruit, spices and herbs have been used to replace the real names of the mothers and children in order to protect their anonymity.

## Comparison group sample

The RuFamSo staff were able to identify six of the original mothers whose babies had been matched 'controls' in the first study. The researcher was not able to make a further selection from this pool but sought to meet and interview as many of them as possible. One of this pool was visiting Jamaica from St. Maarten.[7] By the time the researcher was able to contact her, she had already returned to St. Maarten.

TABLE 2.1: SAMPLE OF TMP PARTICIPANTS AND CHILDREN

| Name | Occupation | Child's name |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Pansy | School Tuck Shop* Assistant/Vendor | Ginger |
| 2. Poinsettia | Cosmetologist | Almond |
| 3. Rose | School Teacher | Cinnamon |
| 4. Daisy | School Teacher | (Her baby boy died. Has a one-year-old son, Paprika.) |
| 5. Violet | Senior Accounting Clerk | Pimento |
| 6. Camellia | School Teacher | Bay Leaf |
| 7. Buttercup | Police Constable | Vanilla (a surviving twin) |
| 8. Dahlia | School Nurse | Cocoa |
| 9. Chrysanthemum | Caregiver/Practical Nurse | Basil |
| 10. Lily | Office Helper/Cook | Coriander |

*A tuck shop is a bakery or confectionary shop, usually located near a school.

To supplement the five remaining comparison group participants, five mothers and children were included who had not been part of the original study but who had given birth to their first child between 1986 and 1989 when they were less than 16 years of age. These additional mothers and their children were identified with the assistance of TMP participants themselves as well as a school principal.

Table 2.2 represents the final comparison group sample and their children. Names of Caribbean flowers, fruit, spices and herbs have been used to replace the real names of the mothers and children, in order to protect their anonymity.

## Visits and interviews

Of the 60 projected interviews of TMP participants and their children (20), comparison group participants and their children (20) and the teachers of all the children (20), all but two interviews were conducted during the period February to June 1999. The two that were conducted later were:

- Daisy, who attended the TMP Project in 1989 but lost her baby in childbirth. She has since married and had a son, Paprika, who is one year old. No school visit was required for him. Prior to her interview, consideration was given to whether Daisy should still be kept in the sample as she would not have a child who could be interviewed. However, her interview proved so valuable in its content to the study that her place in the sample was maintained.

- The remaining interview was conducted in July with Vanilla,

TABLE 2.2: SAMPLE OF COMPARISON GROUP MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

| | Name | Occupation | Child's name |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Heather | Unemployed | Nutmeg |
| 2. | Lilac | Unemployed | Thyme |
| 3. | Hyacinth | Unemployed/hairdresser (part–time) | Oregano |
| 4. | Gerbera | Higgler/ICI* | Cayenne |
| 5. | Begonia | Higgler | Rosemary |
| 6. | Petunia | Secretary | Saffron |
| 7. | Tulip | Unemployed/ Runs a bar | Chamomile |
| 8. | Zinnia | Basic School** Teacher | Fevergrass |
| 9. | Marigold | School Ancillary Worker | Spearmint |
| 10. | Jasmine | Bar Tender | Capsicum |

* Higgler or ICI stands for 'Informal Commercial Importer' a government category for taxation purposes so that persons who buy goods abroad and bring them to sell in Jamaica will pay import duties.
**Basic School is the term used in Jamaica for preschools. They cater to children aged 4 to [illegible] years; about 80 percent of children in that age group attend them. They are part of the Ministry of Education's Early Childhood programme.



daughter of Buttercup. Vanilla lives in the United States with her father's family and arrived in late summer to visit her mother. Efforts were made to have Vanilla's teacher complete and mail the school performance response on her return to the USA, but this was not received.

## 'Geography' of the interviews

With the resolve that once a mother was interviewed, her child would also be found and interviewed (wherever that child may be), the researcher was led on some interesting paths to complete the samples for both the TMP and comparison groups. Visits spanned the parishes of Kingston, St. Catherine, Portland and Clarendon.

- May Pen, Clarendon, where the RuFamSo office is located, is a town with adequate roads. On the other hand, the school attended by Bay Leaf, son of Camelia, is located in a remote rural district in the hills of St. Catherine. Classes stopped as the faces of 300 children and their teachers were focused on this strange *leydi cum in cyar to talk to Bay Leaf and Bay Leaf teacha* (one student's version of my visit in Jamaican Creole, which interpreted says, *A lady has come in a car to speak with Bay Leaf and his teacher*).

- By the same token, Frankfield, in the hills of Clarendon, is a picturesque, lush and beautiful part of the parish.



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But the 50 kilometer journey there over roads that have more potholes than surfaces, to meet with one of the TMP mothers and her daughter, took its toll on an eight year old vehicle, leaving the researcher stranded with a boiling radiator in the middle of nowhere!

- All of the TMP mothers are working women and all but two found it more convenient to be interviewed at their places of work. These interviews were conducted in such locations as the back of a hairdressing salon, in an empty school room, at the Police Mobile Reserve and at a daycare centre. One mother was pursuing evening studies at a business college in Kingston and suggested that she be interviewed there. Another participant, a teacher, suggested that I interview her at home when she was on half term holiday, at which time I could interview her daughter as well.

- Of the 10 comparison group mothers, four were unemployed and two 'semi-employed'. These were interviewed at their homes. Four were interviewed at their places of work. All of the five original comparison group participants were unemployed.

- It was interesting to interview one of the comparison group mothers at her home in an economically depressed area of May Pen and to learn on the news media that evening that the police had captured one of the 10 most wanted criminals in Jamaica in that very area that day!

## Focus group session

The Focus Group session was held on a Saturday afternoon in July at the Devon House restaurant in Kingston. TMP participants were invited to attend with their children, and special transport from Clarendon was provided for all who wished to travel by bus. A games programme was specially arranged for the children whilst the mothers participated in the Focus Group session.

The idea of bringing together all 10 of the TMP participants as a group to address issues that had emerged during the interviews had been proposed as part of the study design. The Focus Group method to provide input to the data gathering process was two-fold:

- TMP participants had an opportunity to share their perceptions of the programme in a group situation, enabling the researcher to identify shared views.

- Despite great openness in the interviews, it was hoped that the dynamics of the group might help some of the less assertive participants in identifying less positive features of the project that they may have thought it insensitive to share with the researcher in a one-on-one interview.

The Focus Group session sought responses from the TMP Participants to the following questions:

- What, if any, are the critical success factors of the Teenage Mothers Project?

- What should similar projects modify and change to achieve greater effectiveness in the future?

The Devon House occasion also provided an opportunity for positive feedback and encouragement to be given to the former TMP Participants. A record of the occasion was captured on video and has been made available to RuFamSo and the Bernard van Leer Foundation

6 Johnson R (1993) *Attitudinal preparation of the Jamaican worker*; doctoral dissertation, University of the West Indies.
Sinanan J (1980) *I–E locus of control in Jamaica*; doctoral dissertation, University of the West Indies.

7 St. Maarten is a small French–Dutch Caribbean island that offers employment to skilled Jamaicans.



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Chapter three

# *Our stories: TMP participants and children*

In the text below, the use of italics indicates the subject's verbatim report or the researcher's comment. Names of Caribbean flowers, fruit, spices and herbs have been used to replace the real names of the mothers and children, in order to protect their anonymity.

**1. Pansy**
**age: 30 years**
**child: Ginger**

*I became a kind of role model in my community.*

Lunch is a busy time for tuck shop[8] staff at the Comprehensive High School. Pansy was breathless, as she had just completed her tuck shop shift when I arrived to interview her after a drive that took me some 56 kilometers out of the town of May Pen, along very, very poorly surfaced roads.

It was whilst a student at this very same Comprehensive School where she is now employed that Pansy was found to be pregnant and told not to return to the school.

In 1986, when she was 17 years old, Pansy started attending the TMP project and gave birth to her daughter, Ginger. She has since had two sons. Ginger's father, who is also the father of Pansy's first son, lives in Florida. The father of Pansy's five year old son lives in New York. Pansy's own father, who also lives in the United States, wished to adopt his granddaughter and take her with him to the United States, but Pansy refused.

For Pansy, the most difficult part of becoming a mother was facing her own mother, who was very disappointed when Pansy became pregnant. Although Pansy does not regret having had her daughter, she had planned to migrate from Jamaica on leaving school and she had dreamed of becoming an air hostess. In her opinion, her pregnancy put an end to those dreams.

Today she lives at the same address as when she first become pregnant. But she is working on moving out and building her own house, as she finds the presence of her brother (*who smokes and keeps bad company* in the home) undesirable for her children.

## Education, employment and economic independence

On leaving the TMP project, Pansy remained in her mother's home for two years, as there was no one with whom she could leave her baby in order to seek employment. She then went to Discovery Bay to study and

find work. Discovery Bay is a town in St. Ann, which is a major parish for the tourism industry in Jamaica. It is the first coastal town that one encounters after the long drive down from the hills, and therefore on the bus route from Pansy's home.

Pansy left school without any qualifications but pursued catering studies in Discovery Bay and became employed as a waitress. She later returned to live in her village to be closer to her child and has remained there ever since. Unable to provide for her three children on what she earns, she is assisted by the children's fathers.



## Personal attitudes and goals

*I want my children to have an education, a comfortable house and a stepfather to love them.*

When she discovered she was pregnant, Pansy says that she felt ashamed and scared to leave her home and to go on the road in her community, or to communicate with anyone. Nowadays she feels much better about her life and enjoys being able to buy her own things and to contribute to the upbringing of her children herself. She has been a member of the Baptist church all her life and attends meetings of the Women's Federation at her church.

Pansy feels that Ginger, her daughter, is *facety*,[9] tends to be lazy and does not have any manners, yet in my interview with Ginger (see below) none of these behaviours was apparent. Pansy's mother did not discuss menstruation, contraception or sexual intercourse with her daughter, but Pansy intends to do so with all her children.

### Impact of TMP programme

*I would have had more children if I had not gone there, was how Pansy expressed the impact of the TMP on her life. They did a lot for me and encouraged me. Even the canteen workers were great too. I became a kind of role model in my community. I wore a uniform there. I had no regrets going there.*

Pansy considers that the weekly travel assistance that enabled her to travel the 56 odd kilometers with her baby each day was very helpful in enabling her to benefit fully from the programme. The lunch that was provided for each participant, as well as the early stimulation/daycare programme, stand out in her mind as the most helpful aspects of the programme.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. | Ginger |
| age: | 12 years, 8 months |
| father: | L.J. |
| mother: | Pansy |

Ginger was interviewed at the school where her mother is employed. She sat the Common Entrance Examination but was not awarded a scholarship.

Ginger says that she has always lived with her mother, whom she calls *Mummy,*[10] and is quite happy with this arrangement. Ginger knew that she had not needed to go to the doctor in the past year and that her vaccination record was up to date.

Asked to describe her mother's view of her, Ginger said that her mother would say that she makes trouble, *but loves me and that I must work harder in school*. About her mother, Ginger says, *She is a good parent. She is responsible for anything. She is fair.*

Ginger has two brothers, aged 11 and 5 years. The older brother has the same father, but the younger is a half brother. Of her relationship with them, Ginger says that her brothers sometimes give her trouble but, *They are company and we play school.*

At her home, Ginger says that she plays with no one other than her brothers: *I do not want to play with them, but there is a neighbour, a girl who is 16 years old*, with whom she likes to talk. When not in school, Ginger enjoys reading and watching television, and at school she both plays with and talks to two friends.

Ginger said that her favourite teacher would say that she should not waste time, but should get on with her work. She could not think of what a teacher that she did not like might say.

Asked what her career ambition is, Ginger said that she would like to be either a lawyer or an air hostess.

### School performance report

Mr P, Ginger's teacher since September 1998, rated Ginger as '3' on academic achievement on a scale of 1 to 5. He spoke of Ginger being particularly articulate: *She speaks well.*

From the standpoint of general deportment, Mr P said that Ginger compares excellently to her peers. She has good interpersonal relations with her peers and does not present a behaviour problem. In fact, in his opinion, despite a tendency to talk a great deal, *she displays leadership skills.*



**2.**
**age:** **28 years**
**occupation:** **Cosmetologist**
**child:** **Almond**

*She is always there for me.*

It was difficult to find a convenient time to interview Poinsettia. She is a busy cosmetologist who drives herself into Kingston each day from Old Harbour, where she resides. As she sometimes works quite late in the evening, Poinsettia employs a helper to look after her daughter Almond until she comes home. On my first visit to the hairdressing salon at which she

works, she was engaged in doing a *cane-row* with extensions for a client, a process that could take up to six hours to complete. I had to reschedule our interview for a less busy time.

It was whilst a student at a Secondary School in St. Catherine that Poinsettia discovered that she was pregnant and dropped out of school. At that time she was living with her mother, who took her to the TMP, which she started attending in 1987. She was 16 years old. At the start of her pregnancy, Poinsettia did consider giving up Almond for adoption, but as the pregnancy progressed, she changed her mind and has never given it another thought.



## Education, employment and economic independence

Whilst a student at the TMP project, Poinsettia went on to study cosmetology at a hair clinic. She continued her studies at a beauty school, where she received certification as a Teacher of Cosmetology and she has since pursued studies in skin care at the Institute of Aesthetics in Kingston.

Hardworking hairdressers can earn a good income in Jamaica, and they do not operate on a credit basis with their clients, so they are often 'cash-rich'.[11] Poinsettia is able to provide for all of her daughter's needs without assistance from anyone. This has enabled Almond to attend two private preparatory schools. Almond is now attending a prestigious High School in the parish of Clarendon, to which she was awarded a free place in the Common Entrance Examination administered in 1998.

Poinsettia lives on her own, but has a boyfriend who comes and goes. She has not had any other children since Almond. Almond has always lived with Poinsettia, who admits that the only difficulty with bringing up Almond is the late hour that she often returns from work, which limits the time that she can spend with her.

Poinsettia describes Almond as a quiet child, giving little trouble, and as being sensitive to her mother's moods. *On weekends we read and watch television together*, she says. She would like to marry so that Almond could have a father figure in the house, but she would not like to have any more children. She does not regret having had Almond when she did, however. Although her own mother did not discuss the facts of life with Poinsettia, she will explain these to Almond.

## Personal attitudes and goals

Poinsettia felt embarrassed and lonely when she first became pregnant. Today she feels proud of her achievements, admitting that the TMP helped to mature her and that she would not have been the same person

without the TMP experience. The project's emphasis on goal setting and, in particular, the challenge to consider *where we want to be 10 years from now* remains an important memory for Poinsettia: *That caused me to decide to leave my current boy friend.*

### Impact of the TMP programme

Whilst admitting to feeling embarrassed when she first went to attend the TMP, Poinsettia recalls that she found the teachers were very good and the counselling sessions of tremendous help to her.

There was a particular programme organized by the teachers that was called the 'Big Sisters Club'. TMP participants would meet with one of the teachers – a 'big sister' – on a small group basis. For Poinsettia, this opportunity to open up with the support of a teacher and share with others, proved invaluable. For her, the most helpful aspects of the programme were:

- Having the daycare programme so that her daughter could be looked after while she studied;
- The reimbursement of bus fare, which meant that participants were not out-of-pocket because of the travel costs involved in being a participant in the programme;
- The Big Sisters Club.

| | |
|---|---|
| 2. | **Almond** |
| **age:** | **12 years, 10 months** |
| **father:** | **D.B.** |
| **mother:** | **Poinsettia** |

Although it would have been more convenient to interview Almond at her school because I had to go there to interview her teacher, Almond requested that she be interviewed at her mother's place of work on a Saturday morning when she could accompany her mother to Kingston. I complied and interviewed her at the rear of the hairdressing salon in which her mother worked.

Almond attended two Preparatory Schools before sitting for the Common Entrance Examination in 1998 and being awarded a free place in the High School in Clarendon where she is presently enrolled in the first year.



She has always lived with her mother, whom she calls *Mummy* or *Mam*, but due to her mother's working hours, Almond is looked after by a helper whom her mother employs to stay with Almond until she returns home from work in Kingston. As a result, when Almond needed to go to the dentist in the past year to extract a baby tooth, it was the he'per who accompanied her.

Of her mother, Almond says, *She is always there for me. She's nice and good. She takes good care of me.*

Almond believes that her mother would say that she is a good girl, has manners and must do her work, but that on occasion she misbehaves.

Almond has a half-sister who is her father's but not her mother's child. This half-sister is 11 years old and lives near Almond's home. Almond says that she gets on well with her half–sister, who visits her on occasion. The friends Almond plays with are a sister and brother who are 10 and 12 years old, respectively.

There are two older women in Almond's neighbourhood whom Almond enjoys talking with. One of them is a Jehovah's Witness, who encourages Almond to read the literature of the Jehovah's Witness movement. When not in school, Almond plays with her cousins and her aunt's baby. She enjoys watching television and playing school.



At school, Almond enjoys playing with two particular friends and sometimes two others. She enjoys talking with them.

Discussion about her teachers and her own school performance may have revealed the reasons for Almond's preference for being interviewed away from school. *The child who attends a small private Preparatory School where the atmosphere is much warmer and where there is a lower pupil–teacher ratio often finds the larger more impersonal environment of the High School daunting and difficult at first.* Almond admitted that her teacher, Mrs M., would say that her work was not good. Another teacher had called her alien when she said that Almond had talked and she felt that she had not.

Despite her challenges in her first year of High School, Almond indicated that she would like teaching as a career, or she might work in a bank because she likes to visit the bank when she carries *Mummy's money to the bank for her.*

## School performance report

Mrs M., who had been teaching Almond during her first year in High School, expressed relief at my visit because she had been trying without success to get Almond's mother to come and see her to discuss Almond's progress in school. Mrs M. rated Almond's academic achievement as 1, the weakest on a scale of 1 to 5. She could identify no particular skill or competence that stood out in her mind and classified Almond's overall performance as weak when compared to her peers. In her opinion, although Almond did get on with other students and did not present a behaviour problem, *she tends to be defensive in dealing with others.*

I explained to Mrs M. that the difficulty of getting hold of Almond's mother was probably related to the fact that she worked long hours and

returned home late in the evening. Mrs M. felt that her repeated efforts to reach Poinsettia should have been taken more seriously. She was obviously very concerned about Almond's performance in school.

**3. Rose**
**age: 27 years**
**occupation: school teacher**
**child: Cinnamon**

*It shaped my value system.*

Rose was ironing her laundry at her home in May Pen when I visited her for our interview. A school teacher, she was on half-term holidays. This visit to the home of Rose was one of the few in which I could meet with a TMP mother and her child together. In most other cases, I was obliged to interview TMP mothers at their places of work.[12] Rose started attending the TMP in 1988 and had just turned 17 when she had her first child, Cinnamon.

At that time, Rose had been a student at a Comprehensive School in Clarendon to which she had been awarded a free place. She dropped out of school when she realised that she was pregnant. She describes herself as confused at the time. As she was living with members of her extended family when she became pregnant, and they did not turn her out, she admitted to adopting a wait and see approach when she started attending the TMP centre. She did regret becoming pregnant at that time, but never considered giving Cinnamon up for adoption. Her daughter has always lived with her and she firmly states, *I would never have left Cinnamon.*

### Education, employment and economic independence

Following her studies at the TMP, Rose was among a number of TMP students who decided on teaching as a career and were accepted to a three-year programme leading to a diploma in Teacher Education from St. Joseph's Teachers College in Kingston. Even after she started attending college in Kingston, Rose worked on a part–time basis at a hardware store in May Pen. She is very appreciative of the kindness shown to her by the owners of this store, who gave her holiday work, enabling some financial independence whilst she was a student.

Since graduating from college and starting to work in the school system, Rose has also pursued certificate courses in basic pastry making, cake decorating and dressmaking. Income from using these skills, as well as giving 'extra lessons'[13] to students, has enabled her to supplement her salary as a teacher in Primary School and has enabled her to achieve a certain level of financial independence.

Cinnamon's father, who is employed in the bauxite industry in Clarendon, provides some support for his daughter, but Rose is able to live on what she earns and could provide for Cinnamon even if she did not receive help from Cinnamon's father.

### Personal attitudes and goals

Rose feels that the most difficult part of being a mother has been giving up social life, but this no longer bothers her because of how well Cinnamon has done in school, which is the same school at which her mother teaches. Despite what Rose describes as shyness, Cinnamon performs well at school and is a good reader. Rose also assists Cinnamon with her work on a one-to-one basis and derives much satisfaction from being able so to do.



Today, Rose feels much more comfortable and relaxed with her present situation than she did 10 years ago. She would like to get a university degree so that she could finance Cinnamon's education. She is a member of the youth club at her church and is joining the Optimists Club in Clarendon.

### Impact of the TMP programme

*It was very fortunate that I attended the project. It shaped my value system.*

Rose believes that the TMP project changed her life. She cannot picture reaching where she is today, she says, without the TMP input. She credits the Big Sister Club – the name given to the group counselling programme – with helping her a great deal. This was because *in a small group you could talk more openly with your counsellor.*

| | |
|---|---|
| 3. | Cinnamon |
| age: | 10 years, 5 months |
| father: | J.T. |
| mother: | Rose |

Cinnamon was initially quite shy and reserved. Her mother was obviously very anxious for Cinnamon to present herself well. I was glad when she returned to her ironing, because on a one–to–one basis, Cinnamon started to relax and became quite articulate.

Cinnamon had attended two schools – a Basic School and a Preparatory School – before 1996, when she moved to the Primary School where her mother works. She is currently in the top class of the school and has taken the National Assessment Programme Examination. (By the end of this study, Cinnamon had successfully passed this examination and had been awarded a scholarship to a High School in Clarendon.)

Cinnamon indicated that her mother, whom she calls *Mummy*, was her sole caregiver. When she fell off her bicycle in the last year and had to be taken to

the doctor, it was her mother who took her. Cinnamon lived with relatives whilst her mother was studying for her teaching diploma in Kingston. Now, she states firmly, *I would not like Mummy to live anywhere else.*

When asked how her mother would describe her, Cinnamon said her mother would say that she reads comics and enjoys television cartoons, that she likes to read and is well behaved at school. About her mother, Cinnamon says, *I love her because she takes care of me, provides food that I love.*

Despite being her mother's only child, Cinnamon named four children between the ages of 3 and 14 who were her father's. She said that she got along with all of them.

She has a neighbourhood friend with whom she plays Scrabble and Monopoly. When at home, Cinnamon reads a great deal but at school skips with two friends. There is another school friend with whom she talks on the telephone and they discuss schoolwork.

Cinnamon has two teachers whom she likes – her class teacher and her teacher from the previous year. She felt that they would say that she works well, and that her maths and social studies are very good.

When she grows up, Cinnamon would like to become a paediatrician *because I like helping children.*

### School performance report

Mrs P. comfortably rated Cinnamon's academic performance as 5 (excellent) on a scale of 1 to 5. *She has leadership qualities. She is a class monitor. She can be depended on to organize the class, and she is cooperative and loving.* Mrs P. also reported that Cinnamon gets on well with her peers, has no behaviour problems and is above average when compared to her peers.



**4. Daisy**
**age: 28 years**
**occupation: school teacher**
**child: a son, dead at birth**

*He was mine and I lost him.*

Daisy, who is teaching on the second shift[14] at an All Age School, was two weeks pregnant when she graduated from a Secondary School in Clarendon in 1988. Daisy's own mother could not take care of her and she was given away as a baby to a foster mother, who was a woman who had married her great-grandfather. Daisy met her real father only two years ago. She has never known her real mother.

A teacher from her Secondary School recommended the TMP programme to

Daisy and personally took her to the project. She was already 18 years old when she delivered, but due to some negligence on the part of the hospital staff, says Daisy, the baby died a few hours after it was born. Her baby was a boy. *He was mine, and I lost him.*

Today, Daisy is married and has a son, Paprika, who is one year old. All this, 10 years after she first became pregnant.

### Education, employment and economic independence

On graduation from school, Daisy received a school leaving certificate and was later advised that she had passed six subjects in the Secondary School Certificate Examination of the Ministry of Education, Jamaica.

Following her programme at the TMP, Daisy was accepted to pursue a teacher education diploma at St. Joseph's Teachers College in Kingston. Whilst at teachers college, Daisy fell ill and had to drop out of college for a time. She recalls that the reception to this situation by the TMP staff was not warm. It was felt by some members of the staff that she was trying to drop out of college entirely and she was made to feel quite guilty for having stopped her college course. *But I was ill and had no control over my sickness,* she says. Having recovered from her illness, Daisy returned and completed her course at St. Joseph's.

Two years ago, Daisy married a gentleman whom she had known for some time. He was not the father of her first baby, who died 10 years ago. She lived with her husband for six months before marrying him. As soon as her baby is old enough, Daisy will return to her studies, as she is anxious to pursue studies towards a university degree in the near future.

Daisy is able to live on what she earns today as a school teacher. However, her husband does provide her with financial support for herself and their baby. A helper who is also a friend is employed to look after the baby when Daisy is away from home. The baby suffers from bronchitis at times and Daisy is obliged to miss school on those days so that she can look after the baby herself and take him to the clinic if necessary.[15]

### Personal attitudes and goals

Daisy describes herself as *devastated* when she found that she was pregnant 10 years ago, because her teachers had so much faith and confidence that she would continue to do well in school. She had received a scholarship to continue her schooling at Vere Technical High School, an opportunity that only a select group of students in Clarendon would be offered.

Although she sank into serious depression following the death of her baby, Daisy remembers that she

received support from all sorts of people and that she learnt a great deal from the experience of pregnancy and childbirth. She considers that the whole experience made her stronger, and she discovered how deeply people cared for her. She says that she was *motivated to make something of herself.*

As a result of her own early life experience of being raised by a foster mother, Daisy had never considered giving her baby up for adoption.

### Impact of the TMP programme

Today, Daisy is proud of her achievements and her maturity. She recalls a male biology teacher at the TMP programme who motivated her and was a father figure for her. He used to tell her that she *could become anything that she wanted to be*. The project showed her that she was not a *failure*, and it is as a direct result of the project that she has waited 10 years to have another child. She strongly feels that, but for the impact of the project, she would have become pregnant again following the loss of her first baby. The project enabled her to put her priorities in order.

Since Daisy's first child died in childbirth and her second was eight months old when Daisy was interviewed, no child report is included here.

**5. Violet**
**age: 26 years**
**occupation: Senior Accounting Clerk**
**child: Pimento**

*You can do anything if you set your mind to it.*

Violet looked suave and professional in a smart business suit as she prepared to be interviewed at the Institute of Management and Production in Kingston (IMP), where she is pursuing part-time studies towards a diploma in Business Administration. An employee of a large company in May Pen, Violet attends courses at IMP two evenings a week. On these evenings, her helper stays with her two sons, aged five and nine years, until she returns home.



In 1989, Violet had been attending school for 11 years and was in the last class at a Comprehensive High School in Clarendon when she discovered she was pregnant. She dropped out of school on her own but was able to return to sit for the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) exams. She passed these examinations in three subjects, and the TMP helped her obtain a job as a pre-trained teacher.

### Education, employment and economic independence

A university degree is what Violet has set her sights on. Since leaving the

TMP, she has pursued a certificate course in payroll applications and another in computer studies offered by the University of the West Indies School of Continuing Studies. She has also pursued a training programme in professional etiquette. Her current programme of study towards a diploma in Business Administration is accredited by the University Council of Jamaica and should facilitate her access to the University of the West Indies.

Violet's sons are wholly dependent on their mother for their livelihood. She has built two rooms on land that her father gave her. This land is on the same premises as her father's house, in which she was living when she first became pregnant.



### Personal attitudes and goals

Five years ago Violet had a second child with the father of her first child. She would like to marry some day and to have a husband who will love her sons as if they were his own and help her with their upbringing, but the father of her sons has another relationship with a woman with whom he has had a child. Violet refuses to consider marriage to her sons' father because, in her words, *He would like to go between the two homes*. The father refuses to provide any financial assistance for his sons as long as Violet refuses to come and live with him.

Violet has a lovely relationship with her first son: *He is my inspiration,* she says. She had never considered adoption, and when she saw her baby, she knew that they could not be separated. Although at times it is difficult for her to make ends meet and to provide for her sons, Violet loves being a mother and *the sense of moulding clay and having a life in your hands* for which you are responsible.

### Impact of the TMP programme

The young woman who, when she discovered her pregnancy, described herself as *ashamed, frightened and disgusted* is today confident that the sky is the limit. The TMP experience matured her and made her establish goals in her life. It helped her discover who she was and what she could do with her life. Violet values the counselling programme and the encouraging staff as the most helpful aspects of the programme, but she especially feels that the early stimulation programme has made her son brighter than his brother, who was not a TMP baby.

*When I left the TMP, a new door opened on my life.*

| | |
|---|---|
| 5. | Pimento |
| age: | 9 years, 7 months |
| father: | C.M. |
| mother: | Violet |

Pimento was the youngest boy that I was to interview. He is not a tall child, so his feet did not touch the ground

when he sat, and he energetically swung his feet back and forth during the entire interview. I wondered if he was tense, but my efforts to relax him made no difference. He also gave very short, abrupt answers to most of my questions. He expanded on nothing, unlike many of the children who, even if not very articulate, seemed to be intrigued by the questions and often seemed sorry when the interview was over. Pimento seemed relieved when the interview was over, so that he could run off and play – typical of an energetic nine year old.

Pimento was in Grade 4A at his Primary School, which he had been attending since 1996. Prior to this, Pimento attended a Basic School for two years. Pimento could not remember why he had been taken to the doctor on two occasions in the last year, but he knew that 'Rosie', the helper, had accompanied him and that he has received his vaccination shots on occasion.

In Pimento's view, Rosie looks after him most although he has always lived with his mother and he feels *good* about this.

Of his mother, Pimento says she is *very kind and I love her. Sometimes she gets angry when my little brother is bad.*

Pimento says that what his mother would say about him is: *I am kind, behave myself, and that I am not to follow bad company.*

He knows of only one brother who is five years old, and he likes him and likes to play with him. Pimento also enjoys playing with his neighbours and says of them, *They do not follow bad company either.* He enjoys talking with his brother, grandmother, helper and two uncles, and at home loves to play *hide-and-seek.*

At school, Pimento plays hide-and-seek with two friends and enjoys talking to his teachers. These very teachers would say that he talks too much, however, although he likes all of his teachers.

Pimento would like to be an actor when he grows up and to enter the Schools Challenge Quiz (a television quiz programme in which school students vie for prizes on the basis of their general knowledge).

### School performance report

Mrs R., who had been teaching Pimento for less than one year, rated his academic performance as average (3) and indicated that although Pimento is not a behaviour problem and does not have problems relating to other students, he has to be spoken to a great deal. He does not take time with his work, although he loves to draw. His writing is a problem, and compared to his peers, his overall performance is average.

**6. Camellia**
**age: 28 years**
**occupation: Agricultural Sciences Teacher**
**child: Bay Leaf**

*I try to push myself so that he can have a better life.*

It was during a free period between classes that I interviewed Camellia, who is a teacher at a Technical High School in St. Catherine. Camellia had been head girl at her High School when she discovered she was pregnant and dropped out of school.



The humiliation was great for her, as she was a good student, a leader and a role model in her school. She had already been offered a scholarship to attend an Agricultural College in her final year at school. Her family was highly critical of her for becoming pregnant when they had such high hopes for her. They derided her and encouraged her to abort her pregnancy.

Fortunately a teacher at her school knew of the TMP project and recommended that she attend it. She gave birth to her first and only son, Bay Leaf, when she was 17 years old.

### Education, employment and economic independence

The staff at the High School enabled Camellia to sit the CXC examinations 'in camera', away from other students, and she was successful in three subjects. Following her time with the TMP, Camellia went on to study at an Agricultural College, and later at the Passley Gardens College of Agriculture, Science and Education in Portland, where she was awarded an Associate degree in Agricultural Sciences. Having completed college, Camellia sought a teaching post and obained her current position.

During the years Camellia has been studying and working, Bay Leaf's paternal grandmother has taken care of him. Bay Leaf lives with his paternal grandmother and attends a school in St. Catherine near his grandmother's home. During the holidays and on weekends, Bay Leaf comes to stay with his mother, returning to his grandmother on Sunday evenings.

Camellia is able to live on what she earns and to provide for her son's needs, but she admits that the weekly care provided by his grandmother is a significant form of assistance.

### Personal attitudes and goals

Admitting to a very loving relationship with her son, Camellia says that she is lonely when Bay Leaf is not at her home, but he is very close to his grandmother, who cares well for him. *He loves me very much. He keeps my spirits up. He motivates me in life. I try to push myself so that he can have a better life.*

She will discuss the *facts of life* with Bay Leaf, although her aunt with whom she was living did not provide any such guidance for her. She would like to have two more children, but does not believe in living with anyone unless she is married to them. She lives in her own home, which she owns.

A Seventh Day Adventist for 27 years, Camellia finds the time to be a Girl Guide leader, attends PTA meetings at her son's school, and has joined the Rotoract Club.

Camellia has applied and been accepted to pursue a Master of Science degree in Environmental Studies at Newcastle University in England. If she is able to find the funding to support her studies, she will take her son with her to England.

### Impact of the TMP programme

Camellia was happy at the TMP programme and relieved to get away from her family during the daytime because they were very critical of her condition. She remembers being encouraged to think of herself as a worthwhile person by the head of the programme, Mrs. Burrell. She appreciated the daycare/early stimulation service that was provided for her baby and found the classes and lessons very helpful. Her only comment is that some of the staff of the TMP could have been somewhat closer in their relationship with the girls.

**Researcher's note:**
This final comment would later be probed in the Focus Group Session.

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| **6.** | **Bay Leaf** |
| **age:** | **10 years, 2 months** |
| **father:** | **L.B.G.** |
| **mother:** | **Camellia** |

Bay Leaf was interviewed at his mother's home on one of the weekends that he spent with her. He has always lived with his paternal grandmother, who sent him to the Seventh Day Adventist Basic School and then the local All Age School in 1994. He is presently in Grade 5 and will take the National Assessment Programme in 2001.

Bay Leaf calls his paternal grandmother *Mamma* and says that she looks after him the most. However, when he had the flu in the last year, it was his own mother who took him to the doctor. Bay Leaf feels quite comfortable with the situation in which he visits his real mother on weekends and stays with his grandmother during the week.

Of his mother, he says she would describe him as *tall, black haired, and I look like her. Sometimes bad. Likes to make me happy – when we go to the beach.* His own description of his mother was that she was *kind, loves me and loves to bite me on my ears and nose. She took me to England to*

*meet friends. I am proud of her. She takes me out.*

Bay Leaf indicated that he had no brothers or sisters. He has a cousin who lives with him and who gives his grandmother a great deal of trouble. Bay Leaf likes to play cricket, hide-and-seek and baseball with three friends where he lives, and there is a 12 year old who makes him laugh. When not in school, Bay Leaf picks star apples, sweetsops and mangoes from the trees in his area.

At school he plays football and plays with small cars with two friends. Bay Leaf admits he likes to talk to some of the girls at school.

Of his current class teacher, Bay Leaf says, *When I do not understand the work, she helps me*. He has no teacher whom he dislikes.

When he grows up, Bay Leaf wishes to become a Fireman.

### School performance report

Ms J., who was Bay Leaf's teacher the previous three years, was interviewed because his current teacher was absent from school on the day of my visit. Ms J. assessed Bay Leaf's academic performance as '3' on a scale of 1 to 5. She indicated that Bay Leaf loved to draw and his drawing was very good. His overall performance was average, but he got on very well with the other students and he presented no behaviour problems. She did feel, however, that Bay Leaf liked to talk a great deal.

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| **7.** | **Buttercup** |
| **age:** | **24 years** |
| **occupation:** | **Police Constable** |
| **child:** | **Vanilla (a surviving twin)** |

*It was like having a second family.*

The curious eyes of a large number of male Police Officers of all ranks were trained on Constable Buttercup as – with researcher in tow – she sought some quiet corner at the Police Mobile Reserve Headquarters where she could be interviewed.

Eventually, a senior officer gave up his office so that we could conduct the interview undisturbed. This did not prevent the interview from being interrupted on at least five occasions whilst officers sought the 'chief' who had given up his office to us.
Buttercup was clearly not fazed by this attention and probably welcomed the excitement, as she has been assigned to the telephone switchboard at the Mobile Reserve Headquarters for some time, and is seeing little action[16] in her duty assignments at this time.

Buttercup was 15 years old when she produced twins – a boy and a girl – but the boy did not live for more than five

days. Buttercup says that she now knows that she was a victim of rape. She was not sexually active at the time, nor, at that time, did she know the person who made her pregnant (although she knows him now). Today she says that if she had only known then what she knows now as a result of her training in the police force, her life – and no doubt that of the father of her daughter – might have gone very differently. Instead, as a student attending a Comprehensive School in Clarendon, she discovered she was pregnant and dropped out of school. At the time, she was living with her grandmother, brothers and sisters. She had no qualifications whatsoever when she left school.

### Education, employment and economic independence

Following her time with the TMP, Buttercup pursued her studies. She applied and was accepted as a recruit in the Jamaica Constabulary Force, where she has been employed for the last nine years.

The father of Buttercup's daughter moved to Florida some three months after Buttercup became pregnant and has been living there ever since. In 1994, when Vanilla was four years old, he took her with him to live in Florida. He has since married and raises Vanilla – his eldest child – along with the children that he has had with his wife. In the holidays, Buttercup goes to Florida to visit her daughter, who is attending school there, or her daughter comes to Jamaica to visit her. Buttercup is therefore able to live on what she earns, as her daughter's father is wholly responsible for his child, except when she visits her mother in Jamaica.

### Personal attitudes and goals

With Vanilla living overseas with her father, Buttercup has been free to pursue her present career, but she would like her daughter to live with her and is not happy with the current arrangement. Her dream is to live together with her daughter, taking her to school and picking her up. Buttercup is working on getting Vanilla back to Jamaica to live with her:

*It is sad not having her around. I feel as if she should be with me. I love her and she blames me for not having her with me. I love the relationship of mother and daughter.*

When she first became pregnant, Buttercup felt that she was worthless: *the worst child of my mother!* She felt that she had brought shame on her family and wondered, *Why me?* Today she feels good about her life. I made a mistake but *I have tried hard to get where I am now*. Her only problem is the thought of getting pregnant again, despite the fact that she is not living with anyone, because she would not like to have any more children

**Impact of the TMP programme**
**Buttercup recounts that when she first went to the TMP, they scrutinized her report and arranged to send her back to school. They made her realise that she was not *parked*. They showed so much interest in all the girls *even when we did not believe in ourselves. It was like having a second family.* Her only wish is that the TMP facilities had been larger to accommodate more girls like herself.**

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| 7. | **Vanilla** |
| age: | **9 years, 8 months** |
| father: | **S.W. (living in Florida, USA)** |
| mother: | **Buttercup** |



Vanilla's interview was held long after all the other interviews were concluded because she attends school in Florida and came to visit her mother in late July for the summer holidays.

Since going to the United States in 1994 to live with her father, Vanilla has attended three different Elementary Schools. She is in Grade 4 in the US system. Vanilla explained that a number of moves to new homes were the reason for her frequent school changes.

Vanilla is looked after most by her paternal grandmother, whom she calls *Mildred*. She says that the current living arrangement is *okay*. She has not been ill in the last year but when she is ill, her aunt, her father's sister, cares for her.

When asked how her mother would describe her, Vanilla could only say, *She is big*. About her own mother, Vanilla said, *She has got short hair. I feel good about her. She's nice.*

Vanilla's father has had three children with other women. They range in age from 2 to 8 years. She has two halfsisters who live in New York and a halfbrother who lives in Florida. A cousin named Chris lives with Vanilla, and she plays most with him when at home. She plays Free Stag and video games with a girlfriend.

At school Vanilla has four friends. She could not identify anyone whom she could talk to at her school, and she does not like any of her teachers. She felt that her teachers would say she is a good worker, nevertheless.

After a great deal of thought, Vanilla, looking at her mother, said that she would like to be a *Police* when she grows up.

**School performance report**
(Vanilla's school performance report had not been returned by her school at the time of completion of this study.)

**Researcher's note:**
*There is obviously some difference in the perceptions of both Buttercup and*

*Vanilla about the home life that Vanilla has in the United States.*

**8. Dahlia**
**age: 27 years**
**occupation: School Nurse**
**child: Cocoa**

*I differ from the young people today – I am changed.*

Dahlia is the School Nurse at the same Comprehensive High School she was attending when she discovered that she was pregnant in 1989. Today she is married to the father of her two children, Cocoa, aged 10, and a son who is two. Her husband, L.B., had wanted to marry her since she was 19 years old. Although she has been living with him for nine years, they've only been married for five.

Dahlia was living with both her parents when she became pregnant. She did not deliberately become pregnant, and was sad at first because she was unprepared. She has no regrets about having had Cocoa when she did, however, and was never shy or embarrassed about it. All of her stepsisters had become teenage mothers, she recounted.

Her husband-to-be, her mother and a grandaunt all assisted Dahlia when she became pregnant. A cousin tried to pressure Dahlia into having her baby adopted, but in Dahlia's own words, *she refused to give in.*

### Education, employment and economic independence

Despite leaving school without any qualifications, Dahlia went on to pass 3 CXC/GCE subjects and received her certification as a Practical Nurse from Bethesda School of Practical Nursing in Jamaica.

At the suggestion of her brother, who was living and working in St. Maarten, Dahlia went to work there for a while and furthered her studies by obtaining the Curaçao[17] Board certification in Practical Nursing as well as sales training certification. Since her return to Jamaica, she has completed computer training and CPR training from the Heart Foundation of Jamaica. Dahlia has been a working mother ever since she had Cocoa. Steady employment has enabled her to live on what she earns and to provide for her daughter, although she does get some financial support from her husband.

### Personal attitudes and goals

Of all the TMP participants interviewed, Dahlia seemed to the researcher to have been among the most self-confident, assertive and self-assured. Yet at the same time, she was very open and explicit about some of the concerns in her life and made no effort to paint a rosy picture.

She felt that her marriage was going though a difficult phase. Her husband, who had been devoted to her ever since she had his child, was, in her opinion, suddenly *straying*. They were both receiving counselling from a marriage counsellor, and Dahlia indicated that *if this did not work*, she would not be hanging around.

She spoke very seriously and with much concern about her relationship with her daughter. When she was away in St. Maarten, Cocoa was left with Dahlia's mother and Dahlia feels that in that time Cocoa changed: *She used to be polite and intelligent and her work was always outstanding at school... My mother's husband may have roughed her up.*

Dahlia's mother did not discuss the facts of life with her, but Dahlia feels that Cocoa's father would do a better job of explaining menstruation, contraception and sexual intercourse to his daughter (all this from a school nurse who has to educate students on such matters on a daily basis!).

Dahlia does not want any more than the two children she already has. She would like to further her studies as a dental auxiliary nurse at the school in Kingston. She is also keen on Cocoa attending a private Preparatory School rather than the government–run All Age School that she presently attends.

Dahlia plays netball with a youth club at her church where she has been a member for the last 22 years. She is also the treasurer of this youth club.

### Impact of the TMP programme

Dahlia was happy to have participated in the TMP project. She felt that going to the Centre stopped her regretting that she had become pregnant. She considers that the TMP experience changed her values dramatically, *I differ from the young people today – I am changed.*

Most helpful to Dahlia were the CXC classes, the teachers who were Big Sisters, the financial assistance that was given for transportation to and from the Centre, and the care that her baby received at the Centre.

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| 8. | Cocoa |
| age: | 9 years, 7 months |
| father: | L.B. |
| mother: | Dahlia |

When I visited Cocoa at her All Age School, I could not help wondering if her mother had set me up. Dahlia had prepared me for an impolite reprobate who was currently giving her mother a great deal of trouble. Instead, I could have been interviewing a well–polished and very sophisticated 15 year old and Cocoa was not yet 10! She was charming, and one of the most polite and courteous children that I would





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meet. I realized that her mother had set very high standards for her, and maybe this was a good thing in some ways.

Cocoa started her schooling at four years of age, attending a Basic School, and moved to a Primary in 1997. She had lived with her grandmother when her mother went to work and study in St. Maarten. When asked about how she felt living away from her mother, Cocoa said:

*I want to live with my mother, but where we live is boring, so I want to go back and live with my grandmother.*

When asked who gave her the most care, Cocoa responded that it was her mother and sometimes her Daddy. Cocoa has been taken by her mother to the doctor four or five times in the last year for colds, flu and coughs and thought that she had received some if not all of her shots and vaccines. When asked what her mother would say about her, Cocoa said:

*Sometimes Mummy has to beat me. I do bad things. I am not like other children. When I go out I do not bother her for things or shame her. She says that I am lazy.*

About her mother, Cocoa says:

*I love Mummy. She is a good Mummy. She buys back things that I break. Even when she says she does not like me, I know she does not mean it.*

Cocoa has a little brother who is two years old. She describes him as *fat, bad and 'wrenk'* (Jamaican Creole for smelly and unkempt), yet admits to enjoying the game of hide-and-seek with him.

Although she enjoys swinging and climbing trees where she lives, Cocoa's parents do not allow her to play with other children. There is an older girl whom she can talk to. In school she has many friends.

When asked about her teacher's opinion of her, Cocoa indicated that the teacher would say, *I need to be more responsible in my work and write properly.*

A teacher, who was not a favourite, had once beaten Cocoa. *But I deserved it,* she said.

### School Performance report

Cocoa's teacher, Mrs J., had taught Cocoa for two years and rated her academic achievement as above average (4). She found that Cocoa had dramatic talent, and loved to sing and dance. She stated that Cocoa got on very well with other students and had no behaviour problems. Compared to her peers, Cocoa's overall school performance was rated as 'excellent'.

Researchers note:
*Later in this study, I was to encounter a young man who told me that he was doing wonderfully at school, when his teacher would tell me quite the opposite. At that time I could not help but reflect on Cocoa – a delightful child – with rather low self-esteem, given all of her strengths. There are major problems in our society with self-esteem, especially among women. It is caused in many cases by the way in which children are brought up. I hoped that Cocoa would not be a victim of this.*

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**9. Chrysanthemum**
**occupation: Daycare Giver**
**age: 25 years**
**child: Basil**

*It was the best thing that happened to me.*

On the morning that I arrived to interview her, Chrysanthemum was busy with a group of about eight toddlers who attended the daycare centre that she operates in the house of a relative. Although there was little evidence of facilities to promote early childhood stimulation and little space for outside play, Chrysanthemum was very careful to ensure that the toddlers were being supervised by her relative before she left them to attend the interview.

Chrysanthemum was 15 years old when she discovered that she was pregnant and dropped out of the Junior High School in Clarendon. Her only son, Basil, is now 10 years old. Chrysanthemum recalls that when she first became pregnant, she was very unhappy. She was living with both parents at that time and her mother cried all the time. Chrysanthemum was confused and did not understand many things. Her mother had not discussed the facts of life with her, and she recalls having no understanding of what was happening to her. Her son's father was much older than she was.[18] Chrysanthemum stayed off the street most of the time. She regrets having had Basil when she did because she would have achieved more if she had had him later, and would have given him up for adoption if she could have.

### Education, employment and economic independence

Despite leaving school without any qualifications, Chrysanthemum has obtained a certificate in Practical Nursing from the Manchester Academy, a certificate in Early Childhood Caregiving from the Roving Caregivers Programme, and a Certificate in the Early Detection of Disabilities from the 3-D Project in St. Catherine. She has also pursued a dress making course.

Chrysanthemum has had a range of employment since leaving school and

today is a caregiver at the daycare centre she operates with a relative. Chrysanthemum finds it difficult to make ends meet, however, and fortunately Basil's father assists with purchasing his school books, clothing and uniforms.

Chrysanthemum lives with her current boyfriend and her son. Her boyfriend looks after Basil when she is not there. The space in which they live is very small, and her boyfriend would like her to discipline Basil more.

### Personal attitudes and goals

Chrysanthemum would like to go on with her studies and marry and have another child. Despite being frustrated at not becoming a fashion designer – which was her dream – today she feels much better about herself. When her son was younger, his father gave her no assistance and getting him to and from the TMP project was difficult. Chrysanthemum has found it a pleasure to see her son grow and is proud that the teachers say that he is doing well at school. She feels that this has made the struggle worthwhile.

### Impact of the TMP programme

Chrysanthemum says that she did not realise what the TMP programme was seeking to do at first. She found that the counselling sessions seemed to be *fasting* [inquiring excessively] *into her business.* It was only after she had left the programme that she realised, *It was the best thing that happened to me.* Chrysanthemum realized that the programme made her want to achieve something, become somebody and feel good about herself. *Life*, she said, *was not at an end.*

Chrysanthemum found a number of aspects of the TMP to be useful: the counselling, the Big Sister Programme and the skills training. She also found the nursery to be excellent.

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| 9. | Basil |
| age: | 10 years, 11 months |
| father: | D.J. |
| mother: | Chrysanthemum |



Basil attended a Basic and an All Age School between 1991 and 1997 before moving to the Junior High School that he attends at present and where he is in Grade 5. He has not yet taken the GSAT. Basil explained that he has lived on and off with his mother at different times, but at present, she is the person who cares for him most and he calls her *Mummy.*

It is Mummy who took him to the doctor twice in the last year for *belly pain and headache*. Basil prefers to live with his grandmother and aunt because he can play with the other children who live there.

When asked about how his mother would describe him, Basil said, *She*

*would say I am miserable and have a temper.*

Of his mother, he said, with a smile, *Sometimes she is confused. Maybe because she lives with her one son.*

Basil's father has three other children, a boy aged three years and two girls aged two and eight years. Basil indicated that he plays a great deal with his brother and sisters when they are together.

Of his friends, Basil says that where he lives, he plays most with one boy but that he is not a good friend. Where he lives, Basil only talks to his mother, and when not in school, he watches television and does his duties, such as dumping rubbish and shining the floor.

There are three boys with whom he plays most at school. But at school Basil states that he does not talk unless he is spoken to.

Basil said his teacher would say that his work is good, not bad, and he states that he gives no other teacher *a chance to say anything bad about him.*

When he grows up Basil wishes to become a mechanical engineer. although, *I wanted to be a bank manager.*

### School performance report

Ms S., Basil's teacher, gave Basil a '4' for academic achievement on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being excellent. She said that he reads and writes well and that his language and mathematics are also good. When comparing him to his peers, Ms S. would classify Basil's overall performance as above average. He gets on well with other students and has no behaviour problems.

**10. Lily**
**age: 24 years**
**occupation: Office Helper /Assistant Cook**
**child: Coriander**

*Sometimes I felt like killing myself. I felt alone, as if the whole world was tumbling down around me.*

When Lily first attended the TMP Project in 1986, the counsellors recall her as being so shy and embarrassed about her pregnancy that she would hide outside rather than come into the sessions with the other participants. Eventually, Lily explains, she recognised that she was not the only 12-year-old in the world who had become pregnant and she joined the others in session. For Lily to be among other young women like herself greatly eased the way she felt about her pregnancy.

Lily was in the sixth and final year of her Primary School when she realised that she was pregnant. She simply dropped out of school. She is the

eldest child of a large family, and her parents were extremely upset. They never formally threw her out of the house, but Lily would often leave her home after a fuss and return when things had cooled down.

Today, at 24 years of age, Lily has one child, a son, Coriander, who lives in her parents' home, which is on the same premises as her own. Lily's mother loves Coriander very much, and Lily is very comfortable with this arrangement, as he also has the company of her younger brothers and sisters.

Twelve years ago, when her son was born, the nurses in the Hospital encouraged Lily to offer him for adoption. She was willing at the time because she realised that she was too young to mother a child and was angry and upset that the pregnancy had caused her to drop out of school at such an early age. However, her mother refused to allow her first grandchild to be adopted, and today Lily is happy that the decision was taken to keep her son.

Despite being proud of having *raised* a son, Lily says Coriander is troublesome at times and likes to play football a great deal. She is encouraging him to settle down and to read and write more, especially as he is sitting the National Assessment Programme (NAP)[19] examinations this year.

## Education, employment and economic independence

As a result of the time spent with the TMP programme, Lily received a School Leavers Certificate that enabled her to be employed in a garment factory in the parish of Clarendon. Following the closure of this factory and a further stint in a similar enterprise, Lily was unemployed for a year until she was offered the position she now holds. She has not pursued further training or received further qualifications, but she stresses her love for dressmaking, a skill that she acquired while a participant in the TMP programme.

Although able to live on what she earns, Lily acknowledges some assistance from her parents in raising her son, and the particular help of her current boyfriend, with whom she lives and who assisted her financially when she was unemployed. The *Pardner*[20] that she *throws* has also enabled her to be financially independent to a point.

Lily has been living with her current boyfriend for the last six years. However, she dreams of marrying, having one more child, living with her son and educating him, and having a husband who loves her child. This is not possible in her current relationship, she feels, as her boyfriend may assist her financially at times but does not care for her son.

**Personal attitudes and goals**

Lack of time and tiredness after work prevent Lily from participating more in her community, although she occasionally attends two churches. Unlike her mother, she has undertaken to explain *the facts of life* to her younger siblings, feeling strongly that ignorance of these facts were a major contributor to her early pregnancy. She has discussed menstruation, contraception and sexual intercourse with her siblings and has warned her 12-year-old son that if he *fools around with the girls and gets one of them pregnant, he will have to leave school early and work to look after the baby.*



Lily regrets that despite her own history, a younger sister also became pregnant when she was in High School.

**Impact of the TMP programme**

*Today I feel wonderful about myself and happy about my son. I would not have reached as far in life as I have.*

These words tell how Lily assesses the impact of the TMP on her life, enabling her to read, write and get a job. Most of all, she loved the dressmaking she was taught. She also greatly appreciated the counselling and information about the cleaning and care of the household that she received. The only person, other than the project staff, who had been as helpful to her was the nurse at the Clinic who referred her to the project.

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| **10.** | **Coriander** |
| **age:** | **12 years, 1 month** |
| **father:** | **J.C.** |
| **mother:** | **Lily** |

Coriander was on half-term holidays from school, so his mother arranged for me to meet him at her place of employment. Looking at Coriander with his mother, one had the impression of a sister and brother, because Lily was in fact the same age as Coriander is now when she became pregnant with him.

Coriander attended Basic School between 1989 and 1993, before moving to the Primary School that he has been attending since 1993. He is currently in Grade 6 and will take the NAP examination later in the year. Coriander was taken to the doctor once in the last year when he was hit by a child in his school. He was taken by the mother of the child who hit him.

Coriander lives in the home of his grandmother, in the same compound as the house in which his mother lives with her boy friend. He indicated that his grandmother looks after him the most and that he calls his grandmother *Mummy* and his mother *Lily*. He is quite happy about this arrangement,

because although he would like to live with his mother, *they talk to me* [at grandmother's] *and I like it.*

Coriander felt that his mother would say the following about him:

*I love football. I should take up my books and read more. I must work harder at school. She loves me and I love her.*

About his mother, Coriander says:

*I would like her to marry, although I don't want her to move away from me. She takes good care of me and only does not give me something when she has no money.*

Coriander was unaware of any brothers or sisters that he may have but spoke of getting along very well with his aunts and uncles, who live in his grandmother's home. Coriander plays with his auntie and other children in the community and enjoys talking with his grandmother at home. When not in school, Coriander enjoys football and reading from the school library books.

At school, Coriander plays cricket with two school friends. He likes to talk to another friend, but *she likes to miss school a lot and I tell her not to.*

Coriander felt that his class teacher would say, *I can read but I write slowly.* Although he likes all of his teachers, he thinks they would say, *I must stop 'romping'* [playing].

Coriander would like to be a Tax Collector when he grows up, *because they work in an office.*

### School performance report

Mrs B. had been teaching Coriander for less than one year. She classified his academic achievement as '3' on a scale of 1 to 5. She stressed that his reading skills were good and that he liked to draw. Coriander also loves to play football. Compared to his peers, Mrs B. would classify him as 'average' in his overall performance. He gets along well with other students most of the time and does not present any behaviour problems.

8 A 'tuck shop' is a bakery or confectionary shop, usually located near a school.

9 'Facety' is a word from Jamaican Creole. Although it sounds similar to the English ***facetious***, it does ***not*** have the same meaning. 'Saucy' is the closest translation. A 'facety' child is seen as an assertive child who will often speak up when they have not been spoken to by an adult. In urban, but more so in rural, Jamaica, this behaviour is still not seen as desirable by many parents and teachers, some of whom still believe that children should only speak when spoken to.

10 Quite frequently in Jamaican families where the grandmother is a principal caregiver (even when the mother may live at the house), children call the grandmother by the maternal terms of Mama or Mummy, and their own mothers by their first names. This is not a hard and fast rule but the question was asked to see whether there was any trend that might emerge across the sample.



11 RuFamSo Project staff told the researcher that Poinsettia has on occasion sent small donations to the project of which she was once a participant with the message, ***Use this to do something to help the girls.***

12 This would prove a contrast to several of the mothers in the comparison group, whom I interviewed at their homes, sometimes with children present, because they were unemployed or worked from their homes.

13 'Extra lessons' are lessons held after school hours by teachers who offer the students extra attention, which is not always possible in class time given the sizes of many classes in Primary, Secondary and All Age schools on the island (at times 50 to 70 students can be found in one classroom). Good teachers can supplement their incomes with these fees, which are paid to them directly. However, some school administrators frown on the practice because it is felt teachers do less teaching in class in order to force students to attend 'extra lessons'.

14 Since the 1970s, the Ministry of Education, in an effort to accommodate the large numbers of children in areas where there are not enough school spaces, has instituted a shift system whereby some students attend school from 8 to 12 noon and others attend from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. A teacher may be employed to work on one or both shifts.

15 Daisy's anxiety over her new baby son was so apparent that arrangements were made for him to be examined by a consultant paediatrician in Kingston. The examination revealed that there was no cause for worry, although her son could be inclined to asthmatic attacks.

16 A recently concluded study of ' Patriarchy in the Jamaica Constabulary Force' confirms the view that has been expressed by woman Police Officers in more than one Caribbean island: women Police are given desk jobs whilst the men get all the action.

17 A small Caribbean island that is a dependent territory of the Netherlands.

18 A recurring factor in the data collection is how many of the young women became pregnant at the age of 15 to 16 years. Jamaican law views a 14 year old as a minor, and a man who impregnates a girl of this age can serve a sentence of not less than 9 to 10 years for 'defilement of a minor'. Rape, however, can receive a much shorter sentence if the victim is a female of 15 or older!

19 The National Assessment Programme (NAP) Examination was introduced in 1999 by the Ministry of Education to replace the Common Entrance Examination. Passing this examination gives successful candidates a free place in High School.

20 The 'Pardner' system in Jamaica is a form of cooperative savings whereby a group of persons invest small sums over a period of weeks or months. One member of the group keeps all the funds. Each member of the group has an opportunity to draw on the funds at intervals, benefiting from the volume of funds contributed by all group members in the given week/month. This system of saving is also called ***sou-sou*** in the Eastern Caribbean.

# Chapter four

# *Our stories: comparison group mothers and children*

In the text below, the use of italics indicates the subject's verbatim report or the researcher's comment. Names of Caribbean flowers, fruit, spices and herbs have been used to replace the real names of the mothers and children, in order to protect their anonymity.

**1. Heather**
**age: 29 years**
**occupation: Unemployed**
**child: Nutmeg**

*He was my first one, and I had nobody, so I just kept him.*

My first contact with Heather was by way of the phone call that I made to most mothers to try and arrange an interview. A woman answered and called 'Hattie' (her pet name) to the telephone. Heather came to the phone, after a long wait on my part, and answered tentatively. When I explained my purpose, she agreed to meet with me and went to find a pencil and paper to write down the details. I then overheard a rather gruff male voice in the background asking to whom she was speaking on the phone. She refused to say who it was and this caused a loud and sharp exchange of words between Heather and the man with the gruff voice. Whilst I waited for her to return to the phone, I could hear an argument develop and another woman seemed to be interceding on Heather's behalf, as if she were having to protect her from physical abuse. This woman then came to the phone – after about three minutes – and asked me to call back as my call had *caused a little altercation*.

When I eventually arranged to meet with Heather, she explained that she lived in a house with her son and four *friends*, a man and three women. Further probing could only elicit an impression (hopefully inaccurate) of a living arrangement somewhat akin to a harem, if not a brothel.



When she became pregnant at 16, Heather was living with her mother, her father having died by then. She describes herself as *sad and worried* on discovering that she was pregnant. *A lady called Pat* was the only person that she remembers offering her any assistance at this time, as her mother was most unhappy at her pregnancy.

## Education, employment and economic independence

Heather has never attended High School. She dropped out of school at 12 years of age because her mother and father did not have the money to send her to High School. She has no school leaving certification whatever

and has never pursued any further education or training programmes. She has been employed at intervals as a domestic helper but was not employed at the time of the interview. She admitted that domestic work was proving hard for her to find in May Pen. She has made no effort to look for work outside of May Pen, however.

Heather manages to live on what she earns with assistance from her mother and the friends in the house where she was living. Her son's father provides no assistance for his child.

58

### Personal attitudes

Heather no longer lives with her mother but had never given any thought to living with the father of her son, a man with whom she has little, if any, contact. Despite initially wishing to have an abortion when she learnt she was pregnant, Heather was influenced by her mother to keep the baby. Today she is happy that her son lives with her and states that *one day he will be able to help me.*

She has not had any discussion with her son about the facts of life. Heather's mother had discussed menstruation and *the birds and the bees* with her. Her mother had told her to take family planning pills as a form of contraception. The pills made her bleed, however, and she was too afraid to take the injection.[21] So at 16, when she became pregnant, Heather was using no form of contraception.

When asked about her relationship with her son, Heather describes him as *rude*, and admits that she *has to beat him at times*. For her, the most difficult part of being a mother is when she cannot find the money to send her son to school. She has no plans for his future.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. | Nutmeg |
| age: | 12 years, 5 months |
| father: | K.C. |
| mother: | Heather |

*I love him.*

Nutmeg's interview was conducted in mid–February at the RuFamSo office following his mother's interview. When I visited his All Age School later and spoke to his teacher, Mr G., I was advised that he had dropped out of school and was thought to be attending the Primary School that was closer to the town.

In his interview, Nutmeg stated that he had been attending the All Age School for six years and was still doing so. He was in Grade 6, the class to take the National Assessment Examination, but he had not done so. His mother had taken him to the doctor once in the past 12 months for gastro-enteritis. And he thought that he had received all his vaccinations.

Nutmeg has always lived with his mother whom he calls *Hattie* (the same name his mother's friends use). He is very happy to be living with his mother and would not wish to leave her. When asked about his relationship with his mother, Nutmeg replied, *She like me*. His response to his own feelings about his mother was, *I love him* (a sad indication of his language competence in using the male personal pronoun for his mother).

Ms S. is Nutmeg's favourite teacher at school, and Nutmeg imagined that she would say that he *gives trouble*.

Nutmeg is not in touch with his father, but he does not think that he has any brothers or sisters. Where he lives, Nutmeg does have one close friend with whom he plays football and cricket. At school, he likes to talk and to play football with his best friend. When he grows up, Nutmeg would like to be a footballer like Ian Pepe Goodison of the Jamaica Football Federation World Cup 1998 team.

### School performance report

Mr G., Nutmeg's teacher, described him as a *withdrawn and silent child*, based on the period September to December 1998. Nutmeg's academic achievement was below average and, when compared with his peers, his overall school performance was weak. He tended to associate with fellow students from the same area in which he lived, and he did not get on with the other students in his class. In Mr G.'s words, *He hardly made you know he was in the class.*

**2. Lilac**
**age: 29 years**
**occupation: Bar Tender**
**child: Thyme**

*His father took him from me.*

Lilac was 16 years old and living in her mother's home when she had her son Thyme. At the time she was attending a Comprehensive School in Clarendon. She had attended school for 12 years when she dropped out because she was pregnant. She had no school leaving qualifications and has done nothing since to pursue any further studies.



Her mother *nearly killed* Lilac when she became pregnant, and Lilac was forced to run away with the young man who made her pregnant. She felt that she would have become mad had she stayed in her mother's home. Lilac's mother had never discussed menstruation and sexual intercourse with her, but Lilac intends to make sure that her daughters will not be treated as she was.

### Education, employment and economic independence

Today, Lilac has three children: her son Thyme and two daughters who are the

children of two different men. She is employed as a Bar Tender but is unable to live on what she earns. She receives assistance, however, from the father of one of her daughters. He resides in the United States.

Thyme's father also resides in the United States now. He took Thyme to live with him when Thyme was seven months old. Thyme is now living with his stepmother, the wife of his father, who resides in St. Catherine. In Lilac's opinion, Thyme's stepmother loves him very much.

Lilac looks after her two daughters and is their main caregiver. She tolerates the situation in which Thyme lives away from her because, in her opinion, he is well looked after. She had never considered giving up any of her children for adoption and describes the most difficult part of being a mother as *when I can't find enough food to give them*. She refuses to live with either of the fathers of her daughters because *every minute they fight me, and when I ask them for assistance* [money], *they cannot give me anything*.

### Personal attitudes

Lilac describes her relationship with Thyme as quite special:

*I have special love for him. I was told that he was born dead and they resuscitated him. He is a somewhat weak child. He is a well behaved child and we get on well.*

When Thyme visited his father in the United States recently, he returned with a gift of a pair of shoes for her. Lilac admits to *feeling proud* when she goes out in public with her children, and she would like to have one more child. Her current boy friend would like this as well.

Lilac finds the time for some community work and assists with the local football and netball teams in her community. She has no plans at present for the future of her children.

| | |
|---|---|
| 2. | Thyme |
| age: | 12 years, 6 months |
| father: | L.H. |
| mother: | Lilac |

Thyme attended a Basic School before going to Primary School in 1992. He is in Grade 6 and has taken the Common Entrance Examination but did not receive a free place for High School, so he is repeating what should be his final year in Primary School.

Thyme said that he had been to the doctor on six occasions in the past year and he was circumcised during that time to assist the flow of his urine. On these occasions, he was taken to the doctor by his stepmother's helper, Miss Rosie. He could not recall having received his vaccination shots. Thyme

admits that his stepmother, whom he calls *Carmen*, looks after him the most. He says that he has never lived with his mother and this is *okay, sometimes*.

When asked about his relationship with his biological mother, he says he *feels all right* and that his mother would say that he is a well-behaved child.

Thyme's father had two children with Thyme's stepmother: a boy of eight and a girl of three. Thyme said that his relationship with them was *all right* and that he played with them sometimes. He talks to his stepmother when he is at home, and he enjoys playing football with two school friends. Thyme described himself as a good student and indicated that he liked all his teachers. He had not decided what he wants to be when he grows up.

### School performance report

Ms R., Thyme's teacher, assessed his school performance as '2' (below average) on the 1 to 5 scale. She could not identify any skill, competence or behaviour that was outstanding in Thyme. He did not have a behaviour problem, but his academic performance was below average when compared to that of his classmates.

### Researcher's note:

*I wondered if Thyme was really happy living with his stepmother and her children. Often in such a family arrangement, a wife will agree to accommodate the 'outside child' of her husband so that the money that he earns remains within the home and can be better controlled by the wife. I reflected on Thyme's mother saying that his stepmother 'loved' him and wondered if evidence of material care had not persuaded Lilac into thinking that her son was receiving more love and affection than he in fact was.*

**3.** **Hyacinth**
**age:** **27 years**
**occupation:** **part-time Hairdresser**
**child:** **Oregano**



*It happened and nothing could be done about it.*

During my interview with Hyacinth, I realised that an error had been made. The non-project babies who had been selected at birth for a developmental comparison with babies born to mothers in the TMP programme should have been the first child of their mother. Hyacinth's second child had been selected from the hospital records, not her first. However, because our study explored the experience of the teenage mother with her first child, I decided to interview Hyacinth and her first child, Oregano, who was now 15 years and six months old.[22]

## Education, employment and economic independence

Hyacinth was 12 years old and attending Primary School when she realised that she was pregnant and dropped out of school. She had no school-leaving qualifications but has since acquired the skills of a Hairdresser and practices her trade at her home. She described to me her skill at *cane-rowing, chini-bunning, twisting* and *creaming* hair. She is able to live on what she earns but is assisted by her second son's father.

Hyacinth lives and works at her grandmother's home with her sister and both of their children. This is the same home in which she was living when she became pregnant with Oregano. Her own parents had separated and this had caused her to move in with her grandmother. She has chosen not to live with the fathers of any of her children because she feels that they would mistreat her. She is very comfortable with the present arrangement, where she is living with her children, and if she needs to go out, a member of her extended family will keep an eye on them. She has never considered giving up any of her children for adoption.



## Personal attitudes

Hyacinth has no regrets that she started having children as early as she did: *It happened and nothing could be done about it*. When she became pregnant, she was worried, but it was not her fault, she says. Hyacinth describes a situation at the time she became pregnant where she and her sister were reduced to *providing favours* for money from men in the community because their grandmother could not afford to give them any money. Her older sister was also a teenage mother.

Today, Hyacinth feels that life has changed for the better. She describes her relationship with Oregano as good: *He is a responsible child*. He behaves and is not rude. She loves to see her children dressed and going off to school, and her greatest difficulty is when she does not have the money to do what she would like to for her children.

She was told about sexual intercourse by her own mother, but indicated that she may not be willing to discuss these things with her own children too early.

Her future plans are for herself: she plans to go abroad and buy things to return and sell in Jamaica. She assists in her community and is involved in the netball club that plays near her home.

| | |
|---|---|
| 3. | Oregano |
| age: | 15 years, 6 months |
| father: | A.W. |
| mother: | Hyacinth |

Oregano has lived with his mother, whom he calls *Hyacinth*, all his life and describes his mother as caring: *She takes good care of us*. He has three

younger siblings living in the same house, one boy of 12 and two girls of 11 and 9. Oregano indicated that a brother and sister are his mother's, but the youngest is his father's child, and not his mother's. His mother had not mentioned this fourth child in her interview, possibly because this is not her own child. It would appear that Oregano's father, who does not live at the mother's house, had asked her to keep his child by another woman.

Speaking of his relationship with his siblings, Oregano indicated that he would like to get away from his brother, as he uses bad words, and the other siblings do not have manners. Some bravado emerged as Oregano stated, *I am always told that I am the best child.* Oregano's mother had not described him in quite such glowing terms.

An entrepreneurial streak emerged in Oregano, who said that his mother had told him to work for what he wants, so he has a job at a shop in town and he has bought and raised goats. Oregano has a friend where he lives, and they play dominoes and have reading contests. He has a friend at school, a boy he has known since Primary School.

### School performance report

Oregano's teacher, Mr M., assessed Oregano's school achievement as '2' (below average) on the 1 to 5 scale and described Oregano as being a student whose overall performance was weak, who presented no particular behaviour problem, but who, in his opinion, had no outstanding competence.

Oregano, on the other hand, said that he was a good student, *the brightest one in the class*, which was Grade 9. He indicated that there were some teachers who might consider him a stubborn child, but that these were the young teachers who liked to beat children. Oregano had taken the Common Entrance Examination but did not pass it and would normally leave school in another year. His aspiration to *become a doctor and to help sick people* is somewhat unrealistic; if he continues on his present course, he is unlikely to have any Caribbean Council Examination subjects to enable him to get into University.



### Researcher's note:

I wondered how much of Oregano's interview was influenced by the adolescent bravado of the young male.

**4. Gerbera**
**age: 28 years**
**occupation: Higgler**
**child: Cayenne**

*You jus' have to mind them because you have them.*

Gerbera dropped out of school before she ever became pregnant. She had a sister-in-law who took her to Kingston.

When she became pregnant at 15 years of age, she returned to May Pen to live with her mother. An aunt as well as her mother assisted her during her pregnancy. Her mother lived in the same yard as the father of her child, so she went to live with him for a short period, but she explained, *He did not want to work and he beat me*, so she moved back to live with her mother.

Although she does not regret having had a child when she did, and never considered adoption, Gerbera did not want to become pregnant at that time and is proud of not having had any more children in the 11 years since having Cayenne's brother.



### Education, employment and economic independence

Having dropped out of school so early, Gerbera does not have any qualifications. She started, but did not complete, skills training at a Trade Training Centre. She has worked at her aunt's shop and is now a 'Higgler', who travels on occasion, bringing back goods to sell from abroad.

Gerbera had a second son within a year of Cayenne's birth. She says of the relationship that she has with Cayenne, *It's arright* [all right], but she finds no satisfaction in motherhood: *You jus' have to mind* [care for] *them because you have them*. She does not like to leave the children alone when she travels, however, and her greatest difficulty is when she cannot feed them and they are hungry.

In the middle of the interview, which was conducted at Gerbera's home, Cayenne's father, A.J. came to *visit*. The researcher was happy for an opportunity to meet both father and mother at the same time, as this was not the case in any other interview.

A.J. initially remonstrated with Gerbera and with the researcher for not including him in the interview. He claimed to have come to see whether Gerbera had sent his sons to school; he was concerned, he said, that his sons should attend school regularly. (Cayenne was in fact at home that day, as was his brother, so I was able to interview Cayenne as well.) A.J. had obviously thought that there might be some financial benefit to be realised from my visit, as on occasion poor-relief benefits are preceded by a similar visit from a social worker. When I explained my business and assured him that such was not the purpose of my visit, he sought my assistance with the following situation:

More than a year ago, Cayenne had been injured in an accident with a vehicle on the road near his house. Cayenne had apparently had a concussion and was taken to hospital. Following his release from hospital, his parents and teachers noticed a considerable slowing of his physical

and mental faculties. His father had taken him out of his Primary School and had sent him to a special school for the disabled, where he should have been on the morning of my visit.

A.J. now wished my assistance in making a strong case for Cayenne to be compensated by the driver of the van who had injured him. A.J. had already been to a lawyer but felt that the lawyer was not moving fast enough, and wished my assistance in expediting the process. I tactfully refused but encouraged him to pursue his efforts with the lawyer.

### Personal attitudes

Before his arrival, Gerbera had characterised Cayenne's father as unreliable, a gambler, an abusive man and one not willing to seek legitimate work. Sorry as I was for Cayenne's plight, I did not think it wise to become embroiled.

This one opportunity to meet with a father and mother together, in the same location, but not of the same domicile, was valuable. Gerbera became quiet and sullen. Cayenne became tense and fearful in front of this energetic, attractive and articulate man who clearly looked out for his own self-interests very well. This interview gave some insight into the inherent dysfunctionality in the nature of many of the 'visiting relationships'[23] that exist in our country.

4. Cayenne
age: 12 years, 7 months
father: A.J.
mother: Gerbera

Cayenne had spent four months at the Bustamante Hospital for Children[24] in Kingston in the second half of 1998. He knows that he received a brain injury from the motor vehicle accident in which he was involved. He was taken to hospital by his mother, who visited him regularly. Cayenne has always lived with his mother, and he is cared for by his mother and grandmother. He could not think of how his mother would describe him, but of his mother, he said she made him happy and he loved her.

Cayenne knew that in addition to his 11 year old brother, he had a sister who was his father's but not his mother's child. Cayenne gets along well with his brother and enjoys playing marbles with him. He has not yet made friends at his new school, but at his Primary School, he had a good friend with whom he also played marbles.

When asked about his schoolwork, Cayenne admitted to not doing as well as he had since the accident. His teacher, he said, would describe him as *learning*. Cayenne, whose motor coordination seemed normal for a 12 year old, plans to be an athlete when he grows up: a *runner* [sprinter].

### School performance report

Ms M., Cayenne's teacher, indicated that Cayenne is among the more academically able children in his class, although in academic performance she could only rate him at '1'. His language and number skills are above average when compared to those of his peers, but his reading is poor. He does keep hitting the other children and fighting with them, however.

### Researcher's note:

*On reflection, I did not think Cayenne should have been placed in a special school but should have been placed in a special class in his regular Primary School. His aggressive behaviour could be an indication of the frustration he feels in not being among his peers. The special class, however, is a facility that many schools do not offer. I found Cayenne moderately articulate in his interview and probably still undergoing readjustment after the trauma of the previous year's accident. Examination by a neuro-psychologist might pinpoint exactly where there was a need, and I recommended this to them.*



**5.** **Begonia**
**age:** **29 years**
**occupation:** **Shopkeeper**
**child:** **Rosemary**

*...two goats and a fowl.*

Begonia was attending Secondary School when she became pregnant and dropped out. Her daughter Rosemary was born when her mother was 17 years old. Begonia recalls that her family rallied around her when she became pregnant and helped her to care for the child. She nevertheless remembers feeling very fearful that her mother would beat her when she discovered she was pregnant, as she was *a major beater*. Begonia admits to liking the experience of being a mother.

Twelve years later, Begonia has a total of four children: three girls and one boy. The youngest is two years old. She never considered giving up any of her children for adoption. Her daughter's father had three children with other women before he fathered Rosemary. Today, Begonia lives with another man who is the father of her three younger children. Begonia says that her current boyfriend, with whom she has been living for nearly 12 years, provides for their three children as well as for Rosemary.[25]

### Education, employment and economic independence

Begonia left school without receiving any school leaving qualifications and has never pursued further training of any kind. She has been a Higgler, selling in the market, but now runs a little shop near to her home.

### Personal attitudes

Begonia says she feels good about her relationship with Rosemary. She says

that she does not have the money to look after her, but she will not give up on her. (This response suggested that possibly Rosemary did not benefit as fully from the current family situation as her mother at first presented.) Begonia's own mother did not discuss the facts of life with her, but Begonia will do so with Rosemary.

She does assist at her child's school and this is the extent of her community involvement. ('Assisting' at school is a euphemism for attending parent-teachers meetings and going to see the teacher when asked to come. Many parents do not do either.) When asked about her plans for the future, Begonia says that she wants to give her children a firm foundation, and she has two goats and a fowl that will assist her in this endeavour.

| | |
|---|---|
| 5. | Rosemary |
| age: | 12 years, 6 months |
| father: | F.R. |
| mother: | Begonia |

Rosemary has seven siblings, ranging from 2 to 25 years of age, none of whom are full-blood relations. She knows all of them by name. She lives with the three who are her mother's. She has lived on and off with her mother – a fact not mentioned by her mother. Rosemary says that her real father looks after her the most and she would prefer to live with him. Two years ago, when she had to go to the doctor because she was *eating dirt*,[26] it was her stepmother who took her, that is, the woman now living with her real father.

She describes her relationship with her mother as good and indicates that her mother would say that she is a *nice little girl*. But she swiftly follows this up with: *I love my father very much. He is good to me and gives me things.*

She plays with her brother and talks to a girl who lives nearby. She has a girlfriend at school, and when not in school, Rosemary enjoys reading books.



Although she wants to be a teacher when she grows up, Rosemary was very tentative about describing her own school work and suggested that I ask her teacher myself.

### School performance report

Rosemary's Grade 5 teacher, Ms S., assessed Rosemary's school achievement as '2' on a 1 to 5 scale, and indicated that her overall performance was weak. Despite her helpfulness to the teacher, her academic achievement was below average. Rosemary did get on with other students and had no identifiable behaviour problems. Rosemary's teacher shared the thought that Rosemary was not a happy child and seemed to be daydreaming at times in class.

**6. Petunia**
**age: 29 years**
**occupation: Secretary**
**child: Saffron**

*Others are worse off than me.*

Petunia was the first of the 'new' comparison group members that I was to interview. She was identified by TMP participant Dahlia as suitable because she had had her first child when she was 16. Petunia was a neighbour and friend of Dahlia's. Petunia had been a participant in another project for teenage mothers. Based in Kingston, this project has received a great deal more publicity and was far better known than the TMP project. I was therefore glad of the opportunity to see how Petunia's experiences compared to those of the TMP participants.

Petunia was living with her mother in Kingston and attending a fairly prestigious Secondary School when she became pregnant with her daughter Saffron. Today, at the age of 29, she is the mother of five children, one boy and four girls, ranging in age from 4 to 12 years. She married in 1992 and resides with her husband, who is the father of all her children, except Saffron. She has been living with her husband for a total of 10 years.

### Education, employment and economic independence

When she discovered she was pregnant, Petunia dropped out of school. She had no school leaving qualifications whatever. By attending the Women's Centre, which provided an academic programme and daycare services (without an early stimulation programme, however), Petunia passed three subjects in the CXC. She has not pursued any further training since leaving school and did not work for seven years, but today she is employed as a secretary in May Pen, Clarendon. She is also able to do embroidery.

Petunia is able to live on what she earns now, but would be unable to support her children without assistance from her husband, who provides for their children.

Petunia left her daughter Saffron with her own mother when she came to live in Clarendon with her husband 10 years ago. When asked why this was necessary, Petunia said that her mother was not working, so it was felt that she could look after Saffron better. However, because Petunia was not employed at that time, it is possible that her new husband did not wish to support a child whom he had not fathered. Saffron was later sent to live with her great-grandmother in Portland when her grandmother migrated.

### Personal attitudes

Petunia says that although she finds being a mother very satisfying and she

loves having her children around, it is better that Saffron does not live with her family, although she does come to visit them during the summer vacation. *She is bossy. They are better apart.*

Of Saffron, Petunia says:

*She is still my baby. I love my other kids but there is a difference with Saffron.*

She never considered giving her up for adoption, but the greatest difficulty in being a mother was when she was unemployed and needed to find money for Saffron's requirements. She has never regretted having Saffron, however, and although she felt disappointed when she became pregnant, she feels that no other child produced later could have replaced Saffron.

None of Petunia's younger siblings became teenage parents and she has an older brother who is unmarried and still has no children. Petunia's mother had discussed the facts of life with her before she became pregnant, and Petunia says she will explain them to her own children.

About herself today, Petunia says,

*Others are worse off than me. I am determined and I do like to achieve goals.*

Petunia wants to see her children grow up and become independent:

*My son says that he wants to be a doctor, my daughter a nurse or teacher, and one day I want to own my own company.*

Petunia helps out by teaching in her community Basic School at times.

**Researcher's note:**
*The teenage mothers project that Petunia attended is said to differ from the TMP in a number of ways. The two most noticeable are that (1) the extent of counselling and attention to 'arresting the life-trend' is not as emphasised as in the TMP, and (2) although the children of the teenage mothers are cared for in a daycare facility whilst the mothers study, there is no early stimulation programme. In discussing Petunia's interview, Joyce Jarrett, Director of RuFamSo and former TMP Programme Director, spoke of how much time had to be spent with some participants, convincing them that once their babies were born, it was important to keep them with them and not hand them over to a family member to be brought up.*



| | |
|---|---|
| 6. | Saffron |
| age: | 12 years, 3 months |
| father: | |
| mother: | Petunia |

The interview with Saffron took the researcher to the east of the island of Jamaica, to the lush parish of Portland,

where it rains far more than anywhere else on the island. Saffron has been living there with her maternal great-grandmother since she was four years old. She first attended a Basic School and has been at an All Age School since she was six.

Saffron took the National Assessment Programme Examination this year and is awaiting her results. She is presently in Grade 6 and hopes to be awarded a place at Portland's best known Secondary High School.

I found Saffron articulate, alert, quite open and outspoken, and somewhat whimsical, as if she had a vivid imagination. She told me that her middle names were 'Anna' and 'Alicia', names her mother had not mentioned. She also said that a man, whom she named, was claiming to be her father and that she thought the matter was being *sorted out*. I decided it might not be prudent to probe that matter further.

Saffron said that she had always lived with her grandmother or great-grandmother, that she had *never* lived with her mother. Her great-grandmother looked after her and had taken her to the doctor once during the last year because of ringworm on her face.

On the question of her feelings about living away from her mother, Saffron was candid. She would like to live with her mother, and she wishes that her mother's other children had not been born. She admitted to feeling quite jealous of them. When she spends summers in Clarendon, her mother

*shows deep affection for me when I am with her. She protects me from the other children.*

According to Saffron, her mother would say that she misbehaves a great deal but, unlike her stepsisters and brother, *I do keep myself clean.*

Saffron has three half-sisters and one half-brother. Her brother is 10 and the ages of the sisters range from 3 to 9 years. She says:

*I only get along with my brother. We play together in the sand. The others are mischievous and the youngest one hits me. I hope she will be the last to be born.*

At home in Portland, Saffron plays with her two cousins-in-law, and she expressed a preference for talking with one of them. She enjoys playing cricket, singing and watching television. She has recently lost her school friend, with whom she used to sit under the mango tree and *discuss things,* because she has gone to another school.

Saffron felt that her favourite teacher, Mrs D., would say that she can work well but does talk a great deal. An art teacher in the school beat another

student once and Saffron greatly dislikes this teacher as a result.

When asked about what she would like to become, Saffron responded, *I thought about teaching but I think I will be a veterinarian.*

### School performance report

Mrs D., who has been teaching Saffron for a year, categorised her schoolwork at '4' (above average) on a scale of 1 to 5. She said that Saffron was a very good reader and her language skills are very good. Her overall performance is above average. She gets on well with students but is known to be partial to boys. Mrs D.'s principal concern was that Saffron tended to show an excessive interest in boys for her age and has apparently announced that, as her mother had her when she was young, she too can do the same. Mrs D. mentioned that Saffron speaks about her mother on a daily basis, and that she felt there was some *unresolved* problem between Saffron and her mother.

| | |
|---|---|
| **7.** | **Tulip** |
| **age:** | **27 years** |
| **occupation:** | **Unemployed** |
| | **Dressmaker** |
| **child:** | **Chamomile** |

*I like to see them around.*

Tulip had her first child, Chamomile, at the age of 14 years. Fourteen years later, she is the mother of five children: two boys and three girls. On the day that I went to interview her, she had just lost another baby. She had recently come home from the hospital and was obviously very depressed. On her own in her tiny home, with no one to spend any time with her, Tulip greeted and welcomed me as if I were a long lost friend. She had desperately needed someone to talk to. Her baby had apparently been a victim of crib death. The baby had seemed perfectly healthy at birth, and had been examined and approved for release the day before it was sent home. No one at the hospital could say what had caused this apparently healthy baby to be dead in its crib the next morning.



Tulip was grieving and in shock, but she encouraged me to proceed with the interview and gave full responses to my questions, apparently happy with the opportunity to talk about her life and her children.

Tulip had been identified by a member of staff of the former TMP, now RuFamSo, because her daughter Chamomile was a student in the current RuFamSo project. Tulip had been attending an All Age School in the Parish of Manchester when she became pregnant and dropped out of school. At that stage, she had received only eight years of schooling.

### Education, employment and economic independence

Tulip had left school with no school leaving certification and had not pursued further studies. She did take a dressmaking course at a church outreach centre in May Pen. She has been employed on and off since leaving school and operates a very small bar which is located beside her house. My fears about how much income such an enterprise could yield in this economically depressed area were confirmed by Tulip saying that she is seldom able to live on what she earns. She is dependent on financial support from her own mother and from the father of the child that she had just lost.



All of Tulip's children live with her. She has been in a relationship with her current boyfriend for two years and knows that he has another *baby mother*. She explained that their relationship is a visiting one and he comes and goes. (See footnote 23.)

### Personal attitudes

Tulip loves to care for her children and says that she *likes to see them around*. She had never considered giving up any of them for adoption and would even like to have one more child. She found that the most difficult part of being a mother was obtaining financial support for the children. However, she mentioned that her present boyfriend would like to take her to the Bahamas, and she may go.

When asked about how she felt about herself at the time of becoming pregnant with Chamomile, Tulip admitted to feeling worried, as she had heard so many bad things about childbirth. She believes this eventually led to her having Chamomile by Caesarean section.

At present, Tulip admits to feeling depressed at the loss of her baby and has few feelings about anything else at this time.

About her daughter Chamomile, she feels lucky that she had her, as she is a helpful child. Her main concern for Chamomile is that she has been sexually active; Tulip does not want Chamomile to become a teenage mother as well.

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|---|---|
| 7. | Chamomile |
| age: | 12 years, 11 months |
| father: | I.B. |
| mother: | Tulip |

Chamomile has been attending the RuFamSo Adolescent Upliftment Programme for the last year. She was not performing at the Primary School that she had attended since 1992 and was recommended to the RuFamSo project.

Chamomile lives with her mother and has always done so. Her grandmother lives next door to them, but it is her mother who looks after the children.

the most. Recently, when she received a cut that needed stitches, another RuFamSo student accompanied her to the doctor. Chamomile says that her mother is kind and helpful.

Chamomile helps her mother by cooking and cleaning the house, although she felt that Tulip would say that she is *rude* when she fights with her younger brother and sister. Chamomile also gets upset when her mother beats her.

Chamomile has two brothers, aged 6 and 10 years, and two sisters, aged 3 and 8. She is the only child of the union between her father and her mother. She gets along with her brothers and sisters, and hates it when the father of her stepbrother beats him: *My Daddy would never beat me.*

She enjoys playing with a neighbour – they run and play hide-and-seek and watch soap operas on the television ('The Bold and the Beautiful' and 'The Young and the Restless'). At school, Chamomile enjoys playing with a girlfriend who is 15 years old and another girl with whom she also likes to talk.

Chamomile would like to be a soldier when she grows up, because they protect people.

School performance report

Chamomile's teacher, Mrs L., found that Chamomile is inclined to provoke other children in class and daydreams instead of settling down to her work. She assessed Chamomile's school performance at '2' (below average) on the 1 to 5 scale. Although Chamomile herself felt that she tried hard at school and behaved herself in class, Mrs L. rated Chamomile's overall performance as weak compared to that of her peers.

Mrs L. also told the researcher confidentially that Chamomile was brought to RuFamSo because it was discovered that she was having sexual relations with an uncle who visited, as well as with a man who lived near her home.

**8.** **Zinnia**
**age:** **25 years**
**occupation:** **Teacher**
**child:** **Fevergrass**

*I have big plans for them.*

Zinnia was a 'new comparison group' mother who was introduced to me by Rose, a TMP participant and member of the study sample. Zinnia's daughter, Fevergrass, was a student in the school at which Rose taught. Rose had become friendly with Zinnia because she was a Basic School Teacher and was obviously a parent who was interested in the progress of her daughter in school.

Zinnia was the only member of the entire sample of 20 mothers who was of East Indian ancestry.[27] Practices and attitudes about family are thought to be different in the Jamaican East Indian ethnic grouping when compared to Jamaicans of African ancestry (who make up 90.5 percent of the population). I felt that her inclusion in the sample could provide interesting comparative data.

I interviewed Zinnia at the Basic School where she teaches. She had been 15 years old when she became pregnant and dropped out of Secondary School. She had been attending school for 11 years at that time. Zinnia remembers feeling disappointed at discovering she was pregnant, because she had to leave school. It changed her life, and she felt as if there was no one to talk to.

Zinnia, who came from a large family, was chased out of her home before she became pregnant, because both parents felt that she was conducting herself in a manner that would bring shame on her family. She moved in with the man who is now her husband and became pregnant by him within a year of having moved in with him. Zinnia indicated that although her husband is much older than she is, *we do not quarrel and he is a good father and husband*. Her husband supports her and her children.

She gave birth to a son two years after Fevergrass was born and would like to have five children but will stop at two for *financial reasons*.

### Education, employment and economic independence

Today, Zinnia is Head Teacher of a Basic School, after having returned to part-time study. She has passed a number of examination subjects through an Evening Institute. She pursued courses in dressmaking and in accounts and commerce, and undertook her apprenticeship as an Early Childhood Education Teacher at a local Basic School.

Zinnia never considered giving up her children for adoption and is very satisfied with the relationship that they have: *We have a beautiful relationship*. She indicated that motherhood has not presented any problems and she is very satisfied when her children perform well at school and get good results. She also enjoys their sense of humour.

### Personal attitudes

Zinnia admits to feeling very good about her life today and with her plans for the future. Although her own mother never discussed menstruation with her, she will discuss the facts of life with her own children. Of her children's future she says:

*I have big plans for them. My son wants to be a pilot or pastor. They have bank accounts. They must finish*

***school and go to university. My sister-in-law is filing for Fevergrass to go to America.***

**Zinnia also intends to further her own studies and to pursue a University degree one day.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 8. | Fevergrass |
| age: | 10 years, 7 months |
| father: | H.P. |
| mother: | Zinnia |

The interview with Fevergrass was held under the shade of a large tree at the school she had been attending for the last five years. Fevergrass, who was presently in Grade 5, had attended a Basic School for three years before moving to Primary School. She was not yet at the age to sit the National Assessment Programme Examination.

Although Fevergrass indicated that she was *happier* living with her parents, the picture she presented of her home life was not quite as rosy as that which her mother had given. Fevergrass indicated that her father looked after her the most, although her mother had taken her to the dentist and doctor on three different occasions in the last year. She had also lived with her grandmother for one year.

When asked about the brothers and sisters in her family, Fevergrass replied that she has a total of nine; her brother of eight years is the only other child who is both her mother's and father's. The ages of her siblings go up to 32 years. Her father had clearly produced a number of children from a former marriage or, at least, before marrying Zinnia, Fevergrass's mother.

When asked about her relationship with her mother, Fevergrass indicated that her mother would say that she is a nice child but that she sometimes misbehaves and *does not like to do what she does not like*. Fevergrass's opinion of her mother was that she is a good mother and takes care of her children, but if a child misbehaves they will get *licks* [be beaten].



At home, Fevergrass enjoys playing games with her younger brother and two friends, but there is no one she enjoys talking to. When not in school, she plays, studies for tests and reads. She has five friends at school with whom she enjoys playing.

Fevergrass thought that her favourite teacher would say that she likes mathematics but that her writing is not very good, and that she tends to get annoyed with the other children sometimes.

Fevergrass wishes to become a Nurse when she grows up.

### School performance report

Mrs R., Fevergrass's teacher, assessed her school performance at '3' on the 1

to 5 scale and indicated that Fevergrass is an average student who sings well and is assertive. Her social skills are good and she presents no behaviour problems. Mrs R. noted that Fevergrass has a good singing voice and is in the school choir.

Researcher's note:
*The most noticeable difference that I could discern between this family of East Indian ancestry and the other members of the sample was that Fevergrass's father was considerably older. Nevertheless, he was a good provider for his large family. If his religion was Muslim, then it might have been acceptable in such a community to have had several wives, even living in the same house at the same time. Fevergrass's mother might have been his youngest wife, but she gave every indication that this was a nuclear rather than an 'extended' family arrangement. I did not have the opportunity to confirm these thoughts.*



**9. Marigold**
**age: 27 years**
**occupation: School Ancillary Worker**
**child: Spearmint**

*We cannot agree.*

Marigold was 15 years old when she had her daughter Spearmint. She was not attending school at the time, having dropped out of school after six years of schooling. At the time of her pregnancy, she was living with an older sister. Marigold was not aware that she was pregnant until her sister told her. She has no qualifications whatsoever, nor has she pursued any training, but she has been employed as an ancillary worker/cleaner at an All Age School.

### Education, employment and economic independence

Marigold is unable to live on what she earns, and she receives no financial support from anyone. In addition to her daughter Spearmint, she has two other children, two boys. She has been living with the father of all three of her children for 10 years, but she said, *He is miserable and we cannot agree.*

Her children live with her because she cannot do any better. She cares for them most of the time.

### Personal attitudes

Marigold never considered giving up her child for adoption because she loved her, and she is satisfied with the relationship they have today because *she behave good*. The most difficult part of being a mother has been when she did not have clothes for the children to wear to school. She is most satisfied when her children behave nicely when they go out. Marigold has no regrets at having Spearmint when she did because Spearmint helps her a great deal with the housework.

**Marigold was told about the facts of life and she will tell her own children. She plans for her children to attend a good school and to learn dressmaking, tailoring and hairdressing.**

| | |
|---|---|
| 9. | Spearmint |
| age: | 12 years, 6 months |
| father: | |
| mother: | Marigold |

Spearmint has been attending school since she was two years old. She was at a Basic School where she remained for five years and has been at Primary School for the last five years. She is in Grade 6 and sat the National Assessment Programme Exam but did not pass. Spearmint does not think that she has received any of her vaccinations.[28] Her mother took her to the doctor once in the past year, when she had a nosebleed and vomited blood.

Spearmint said that her mother, whom she called *Mummy*, was her chief caregiver and that she had always lived with her. If asked, her Mummy would say that she was a *good girl*. Her feelings about her mother were that she treated her very well and that made her happy.

Spearmint knew that she had two full brothers, aged 4 and 11 years, and

that she also had a half-brother and half-sister who were her father's but not her mother's children. She does not get along well with these other siblings.

At home, Spearmint plays with four children, in particular, and enjoys talking with four others. When not in school, she enjoys playing school. At school, Spearmint has four friends whom she enjoys talking with.

Spearmint feels that her favourite teacher would describe her work as *fine*. Spearmint expressed a liking for all of her teachers and indicated that none of them would have anything negative to say about her.



When she grows up, Spearmint would like to become a doctor.

### School performance report

Mrs H., the school principal, offered to give the report for Spearmint as Spearmint's teacher was not at school on the day that I visited. Mrs H. had not taught Spearmint, but because Spearmint was a neighbour whom she had known ever since she was a baby, Mrs H. felt sufficiently equipped to report on her.

Mrs H. rated Spearmint's academic performance at '1', weakest on the 1 to 5 scale. She said that Spearmint was a *dutiful child* but that her overall performance could only be classified as weak. She got along well with other students and had no behaviour problems, however.

**10. Jasmine**
**age: 29 years**
**occupation: Bar Tender**
**child: Capsicum**

*He is quiet and Christian-like.*

At 29 years of age, Jasmine has three children: two boys and a girl, ranging in age from 9 to 12 years. Her first child, Capsicum, was born when Jasmine was 17 years old. Jasmine had left school after 12 years of schooling because she needed to help her mother, who was a vendor in the market. She had left school principally because there was no money for her to continue her schooling.

Although she says that she did not deliberately become pregnant with her first child, Jasmine says that she was relieved to find that she was pregnant, so much so that she cried. Her fallopian tubes had been blocked and she had gone to the doctor and received medication and then became pregnant shortly after. She has no regrets about having her first child when she did, and a number of her younger sisters had become teenage parents before she had. She can identify no one who assisted her when she became pregnant.

### Education, employment and economic independence

Jasmine had no school leaving qualifications and has not pursued any further education. Since leaving school, however, she has been employed as a Bar Tender at a pub, a job she currently has. The pay is poor and she finds it difficult to live on what she earns. She lives with a sister and the father of her children, with whom she has lived for nine years. She describes the father of her children as a *cocaine addict* who offers her little assistance with their children.

### Personal attitudes

Jasmine is happy that her children reside with her and she would never have considered giving any of them up for adoption. The hardest part of being a mother is when she cannot help them. It is most satisfying, she said, when you can send them on errands as they have grown big. Of her first child, she said, *He is quiet and Christian-like.*

Although menstruation and the facts of life were not explained to her, she intends to explain them to her children, but has not yet done so.

Jasmine assists with a local youth group.

Of her own future and that of her children, Jasmine said simply, *I want to be a nurse.*

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| 10. | Capsicum |
| age: | 12 years, 7 months; |
| father: | P.D. |
| mother: | Jasmine |

Capsicum started attending an All Age School in 1993. He is presently in Grade 6, has taken the National Assessment Examination, and is awaiting his results. Capsicum recalled that he visited the doctor on two occasions in the past year. On one of these occasions, cold juice had been thrown at him and he fainted. His mother took him to the doctor on both occasions. Capsicum did not feel that he had received all of his vaccination shots.

Capsicum has lived on and off with his mother for the last 12 years. He lived with his father at one time but did not like it because *he hit me*. Capsicum felt that his mother would say that he is a good boy and that he helps her. About his mother, Capsicum said, *She looks after me.*

Capsicum has a brother, age 10, and a sister, age 9. They get on well with each other and do not quarrel and fight. In his neighbourhood, Capsicum plays and enjoys talking with one friend, and when he is not in school, Capsicum says that he reads books. At school, Capsicum talks and plays with two other boys.

Capsicum says his favourite teacher would describe him as *nice*, and he

professes to like all of his teachers. When he grows up, Capsicum would like to become an auto-mechanic because, he says, *I like cars.*

### School performance report

Mrs G., the school principal, offered to report on Capsicum's school performance as his teacher was not available. She assessed Capsicum at '2' on the 1 to 5 scale – below average in academic achievement. She said that he is a quiet and cooperative child whose overall performance would be average in comparison to his peers. He gets on well with other students and presents no behaviour problems.

21 Although the Depo Provera contraceptive injection is banned by the Federal Drugs Administration in the United States, it is still available in health clinics in Jamaica.

22 Mention of this error to former TMP staff met with the suggestion that Hyacinth could have intentionally misled the hospital staff into thinking that she was having her first child, because a mother having her second child at 15 years would have met with severe disapproval from the hospital nursing staff.



23 The 'visiting relationship' in the Caribbean is described as that in which the man and woman in a relationship do not have the same domicile, but one member –usually the male –visits the other from time to time. If children are produced, they usually reside with the mother. This relationship is not, by definition, a common–law relationship, where both partners have the same domicile and live as husband and wife, but no official marriage ceremony (either civil or religious) has taken place.

24 Bustamante Hospital for Children is Jamaica's only public hospital for children only. It was constructed in the 1960s.

25 This relationship would be characterised as classical common–law. ( See Note 22.)

26 Eating dirt is a behaviour sometimes found in children with iron deficiencies.

27 The 1991 Jamaican census indicated that 1.3 percent of the population is of East Indian ancestry.

28 Vaccination certificates are normally required for all children entering Primary School in Jamaica.

Bernard van Leer Foundation

# Chapter five

# *Analysis and discussion of findings*

The objective of the Tracer Study was to assess the impact of the Teenage Mothers Project (TMP) on the original sample of mothers and their children who participated in the project between 1986 and 1989. The study explores the lives of 10 of the original project mothers and five of the original comparison group mothers, whose babies had been the 'controls' when the McCarthy Scale of Children Abilities (MSCA) was administered in 1989. For balance, the study also identified and interviewed five other women who became teenage mothers between 1986 and 1989. These are referred to as 'new' comparison group members. Through qualitative/ethnographic and quantitative approaches, the research has sought to gain an understanding of the quality of life, educational achievement, vocational attainment, parent-child relationships, school performance and individual development of each mother and child.

The mothers' questionnaire obtained information concerning each mother's schooling, further education, religious affiliation, employment, current economic status, family relationships, relationship with her child/children, and the difficulties and challenges of motherhood.

The children's questionnaire explored schooling and academic performance; the child-parent relationship; health; relationships with siblings, friends at school and home; hobbies and interests and future career aspirations.

This chapter will review, summarise and discuss the answers to the research questions.

## Findings of research questions (mothers)

All 10 TMP mothers had the common experience of becoming pregnant between the ages of 12 and 17. All were attending a Primary or Secondary School in Clarendon when they became pregnant. They all delivered their babies at the May Pen or Spanish Town hospitals and received pre-natal care at the TMP. All but two mothers produced healthy babies. Daisy (TMP participant #4) lost her son within hours of his birth, and Buttercup (TMP participant #7) had twins, a boy and girl, but only the girl survived.

The reactions of the TMP mothers when they discovered they were pregnant ranged from extremely upset to devastated. Lily (TMP Participant #10), who became pregnant at age 12, considered suicide more than once.

In all instances, when subjects discovered their pregnancies, they were living in family situations, even if these were extended families. Five of the 10 were living with one or both biological parents; the other five lived with aunts,

grandmothers or, in one case, a guardian. Families expressed their dismay by rejecting, scolding and castigating. Counselling interventions through grandparent sessions held at the TMP rescued these difficult relationships and restored them to a status of tolerance, understanding and support. In time, and in most cases, families stood by these young women through the pregnancy. Afterwards, they helped, when necessary, by bringing the babies to the TMP centre for the early stimulation and daycare programme – when the teenage mothers needed to go to Kingston to study, for example. Lily's mother refused to let her first grandchild be adopted, although that was Lily's wish at the time.



Of the comparison group mothers, four had already dropped out of school before they became pregnant. They became pregnant between 12 and 17 years of age, as did the TMP mothers. Six of them claimed to have been living with their mothers when they discovered they were pregnant; three were living with sisters and other members of their family. The parents of Zinnia (CG #8)[29] had already asked her to leave the house, and she had been taken in by the man who later fathered her child and married her.

Unlike their TMP peers, the reactions of comparison group members to their pregnancies ranged from dismay to obvious pleasure in the case of Jasmine (CG #10). She had clearly been sexually active for some time before becoming pregnant. She had been to see the doctor, discovered her tubes were blocked, was treated and later became pregnant.

In summary, it is fair to say that the starting line was not identical for the TMP and comparison group mothers; family circumstances and level of support, extent of schooling, and attitudes toward the pregnancy clearly differed between the two groups. In all other respects, the impact of the pregnancy and its potential for negatively arresting the development of the adolescent is clear. In this respect, all 20 mothers were in the same shoes.

***Are they employed today?***

Despite the fact that the Jamaican economy is in decline and the unemployment level for young women between the ages of 15 and 25 is twice that of males (Labour Force Survey, 1996[30]), all 10 TMP subjects are employed: three in teaching, one in cosmetology, one in accountancy, one in nursing, one in daycare, one in the police force and two in cooking and vending positions.

By contrast, four of the comparison group mothers are unemployed, and the two who were higglering (buying and selling) were clearly not doing very good business. Of the four who were employed, only the Basic School teacher (a 'new' comparison group member) was in a vocation that required some skills or qualifications.

Clearly, the development of an achievement orientation to improve oneself, the resolve to not let the circumstances of one's life forever be a deterrent to achievement, and the drive to further academic and vocational qualifications is nowhere as apparent among the comparison group mothers as it is among the TMP subjects.

***Have they all pursued further education and training?***

In all but two cases, major, long term training and further education have been pursued by TMP participants. Three have pursued a three-year teacher education diploma in Kingston. Violet (TMP #5) is no longer in pre-trained teaching but has moved into the field of accountancy and is still pursuing courses, which she intends will lead to a University degree in management studies. Poinsettia (TMP #2), the Cosmetologist, Police Constable Buttercup (TMP #7) and Nurse Dahlia (TMP #8) all acquired professional training in their fields. Dahlia studied abroad. Chrysanthemum (TMP #9), who operates her own daycare centre, has pursued numerous courses in her field, some of them through the expanded former TMP project, now called RuFamSo. Lily (TMP #10), who works as an Office Helper and Cook, and Pansy (TMP #1), the Tuck Shop Vendor at a Comprehensive School, are the only two participants who have not gone on to obtain major vocational qualifications, although they have gained vocational experience in a garment factory and in waitressing, respectively.

Most outstanding, academically, among TMP participants is Camellia (TMP #6), who became pregnant when she was head girl of her school. She lost the opportunity of taking up a scholarship that was offered her by an Agricultural College. Nevertheless, Camellia did go on to obtain an Associate Degree at Agricultural College and, following a stint as a Science Teacher, is proceeding to England this summer where she will pursue a Master of Science Degree in environmental sciences. Her only child, Bay Leaf, will accompany her.

By contrast, the comparison group's further education has been limited to efforts by two mothers, Gerbera (CG #4) and Tulip (CG #7), to pursue training in trade and dressmaking at Vocational Centres. Hyacinth (CG #3) has acquired hairdressing skills, and Zinnia (CG# 8) pursued studies to enable her to become a Basic School Teacher. The other six members of the comparison group – including Petunia (CG #6), who attended a different teen mothers project in Kingston – have not obtained any further education or vocational training.



***Have any of them married?***

Two members of the TMP sample are married women. Daisy (TMP #4), who lost her baby at birth, is now married and has produced a son. Lily (TMP #8) is married to the father of her first child and has had a son since she married. Both women explain that their husbands assist with supporting their children but

that they are not dependent on their husbands for their own financial support. As working women, they see to their own needs.

A number of the TMP mothers who have not married have clearly considered offers and preferred to remain on their own. A number have indicated that they would like to marry and even have another child, but that their husbands would have to be prepared to be good fathers to their first child. Any risk of this not working out has caused them to opt for the single life. Poinsettia (TMP#2) referred to a situation where she ended a live-in relationship with her boyfriend because she remembered the TMP question: 'Where do you want to be in 10 years time?'



Two members of the comparison group are married: Zinnia (CG #8) is married to a man who is considerably older than she is and who – as a Muslim – may have had or presently has other wives. Petunia (CG #6), despite being employed as a Secretary, is heavily dependent on her husband to support their four children. Her first daughter, Saffron, lives with her great-grandmother in Portland.

***Have they had other children?***

The comparison group mothers, combined, have produced more than twice as many children over the last 13 years as the TMP mothers combined. Thirty one children have been produced by the 10 comparison group mothers, whilst 14 have been produced by the TMP mothers. All comparison group mothers but one have had two or more children. Seven TMP mothers have never had a second child, and only three have had two or more children. Table 5.1 tells the story.

***What is the nature of the mother's relationship with her child today?***

In Jamaica, it is common practice to let members of the extended family – grandmothers, older sisters, aunts – look after children born to adolescent mothers. Former TMP project staff shared with the researcher the challenge they experienced in persuading many of the TMP participants to keep their children with them, on the grounds that close bonding in the mother-child relationship is known to have a far-reaching impact on the development of the child.

Today, eight of the 10 TMP mothers still have their children living with them. Bay Leaf, the son of Camellia (TMP #6), has been living with his grandmother in Bois Content during the week and spending weekends with his mother, but he will be going to England this summer with his mother when she goes to pursue a Master of Science Degree. In England, he will be fully under his mother's care. Vanilla, the daughter of Police Constable Buttercup (TMP #7), has been living with her father in the United States, but her mother is now eager to have her back home and living with her.

TABLE 5.1: NUMBERS OF CHILDREN PRODUCED BY TMP AND COMPARISON GROUP MOTHERS

| TMP mothers | | Comparison group mothers | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Participant #** | **# Children** | **Participant #** | **# Children** |
| 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| 5 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| 6 | 1 | 6 | 5 |
| 7 | 1 | 7 | 5 |
| 8 | 2 | 8 | 2 |
| 9 | 1 | 9 | 3 |
| 10 | 1 | 10 | 3 |
| Total | 14 | Total | 31 |

Notes to table 5.1: Of particular interest in these data is the finding that comparison group member #6, Petunia, who attended a Kingston-based project for teenage mothers, leads the numbers for her group with five children, along with Tulip (CG #7).

It should be recalled that one of the objectives of the TMP was to 'lessen the likelihood of repeat pregnancies, thereby improving the life chances of the young child'.



Eight of the comparison group mothers also have their children living with them. Comparison group participant #2, Lilac, had her son taken away by his father to live with the father's wife. The father himself lives in the United States. Petunia (CG #6), mother of Saffron, has never had Saffron living with her on a full-time basis. Saffron first lived with her grandmother in Kingston, and when the grandmother migrated, Saffron moved in with her great-grandmother in Portland.

There was a qualitative difference in these arrangements, however, that was evident to the researcher. The strong impression given by the majority of the comparison group mothers was that having their child living with them was a situation in which they had no choice or option, so they accepted it:

- Comparison group participant #1: *He was my first one, and I had nobody, so I just kept him.*

- Comparison group participant #4: *You jus' have to mind them because you have them.*

These remarks were very different from those of TMP mothers:

- TMP participant #5: *He is my inspiration. ...* [I love] *the sense of*



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*moulding clay and having a life in your hands.*

- TMP participant #6: *He motivates me in life. I try to push myself so that he can have a better life.*

***How have the mothers changed and what have they made of their lives? Are their lives any different to the lives of other teenage mothers who were not part of the TMP intervention?***

Over the last 15 years in Jamaica there has been much erosion of the values that held education as the vehicle for personal advancement. The get-rich-quick motivation of the drug trade, fanned by the materialism and opulence of North American cultural influences, has found much currency in a culture that formerly laid great store in educating its youth as the principal gateway to an improved future – and certainly to a better life than that of their parents. Education and vocational qualifications still stand for a great deal, however, and can provide the means to an improved quality of life. For TMP participants, that investment of time, effort and funds has paid off.



Without question, the ability of the TMP mothers to turn around their life circumstances following their early pregnancies and to make a life for their children and themselves is remarkable, particularly when compared to the original comparison group mothers. The ability of these mothers to change a potentially negative experience into a positive opportunity and the will to pursue their further education and to establish themselves in a vocation is quite evident.

In a number of instances, TMP participants are still on an upwardly mobile path:

- Camellia (TMP #6) is leaving Jamaica to pursue her Master's Degree.
- Violet (TMP #5) is working towards taking a degree in management studies.
- Rose (TMP #3) wishes to follow her Teacher's Diploma with a degree so that she can finance her daughter Cinnamon's education.
- Lily (TMP #8) wishes to become a Dental Nurse.
- When she can leave her baby, Daisy (TMP #4) will pursue a degree in education.

Several of the other participants wish to marry, have homes of their own, and maybe have another child, but have no intention of rushing that decision.

The TMP participants themselves are the finest spokespersons for the change that – with the TMP intervention – they have wrought upon their own lives:

- *I would have had more children if I had not gone there.* (TMP participant #1)

- *It was very fortunate that I attended the project; it shaped my value system.* (TMP participant #3)

- *When I left the TMP, a new door opened on my life.* (TMP participant #5)

- *It was like having a second family. ... they showed so much interest in all the girls even when we did not believe in ourselves.* (TMP participant #7)

- *I differ from the young people today – I am changed.* (TMP participant #8)

- *It was the best thing that happened to me. ... life was not at an end.* (TMP participant #9)

- *I would not have reached as far in life as I have.* (TMP participant #10)

This extent of life change and evidence of continued striving for improvement is presented in only four of the comparison group. Zinnia (CG #8) has big plans for her children, wanting them both to go to University. Petunia (CG #6) wants to own her own company one day and wishes her children to grow up and be independent. Jasmine (CG #10), a Bar Tender, would like to become a Nurse, and Marigold (CG #9), an Ancillary Worker, would like her children to learn dressmaking, tailoring and hairdressing.

Other comparison group mothers expressed high hopes for their children. However, given their present economic and vocational plight, one wonders how they might achieve what aspirations they have:

- Heather (CG #1) and Lilac (CG #2) simply had *no plans.*

- Hyacinth (CG #3) wanted to travel so that she could continue to buy and sell (higglering).

- Gerbera (CG #4) wished to find someone in England who would marry her and look after her children.

- Begonia (CG #5) wished to give her children a firm foundation and to this end was raising *two goats and a fowl.*

- Tulip (CG #7), mother of 5, whose boyfriend wants to take her to the Bahamas, might go.

The TMP intervention seems to have made an indelible impression in fostering the resilient spirit and motivation for achievement found among its participants. The TMP participants' figure of 100 percent employment is outstanding in comparison with their non-TMP peers. Despite their early initial setback, many of these young women have achieved more than mere employment, however. They have done what many generations of Jamaicans have aspired to do: attain a

quality of life and standard of living that surpasses that of the previous generation – their parents.

The 1995 report 'Teens' children: Charting their progress through research'[31] studied the developmental progress of the TMP babies who had participated in the early stimulation programme. It states:

*Our story revealed that ... the children under TMP care did better than other children ... not only in comparison with the control group, but by any standard. (page 18)*

It is clear that from the standpoints of resilience, academic achievement and vocational attainment, the TMP mothers we have studied have done far better, *not only in comparison with the control group, but by any standard.*



***Were there differences in attitudes between the TMP mothers and the comparison group mothers?***

The mothers in both groups were asked, during the interviews, to respond to a number of statements (see Appendix Two). Their responses allow assessments to be made on three factors: Internal–External Locus (I–E Locus) of Control, Assertiveness and Alienation. Table 5.2 sumarises the scores for both groups of mothers on the three factors of I–E Locus of Control, Assertiveness and Alienation.

Comparison of the scores on all three scales shows differences between the two groups of mothers. The differences in scores on the I–E Locus of Control and Alienation scales are significant at p=.05.

Figure 5.1 plots the scores for both groups on the I–E Local of Control Scale and shows that the TMP group have a significantly higher internal LOC than do their comparison group peers. This means that TMP participants have a greater sense of control over their lives and their existence and they hold themselves more responsible for the outcome of their actions than do their non-TMP peers.

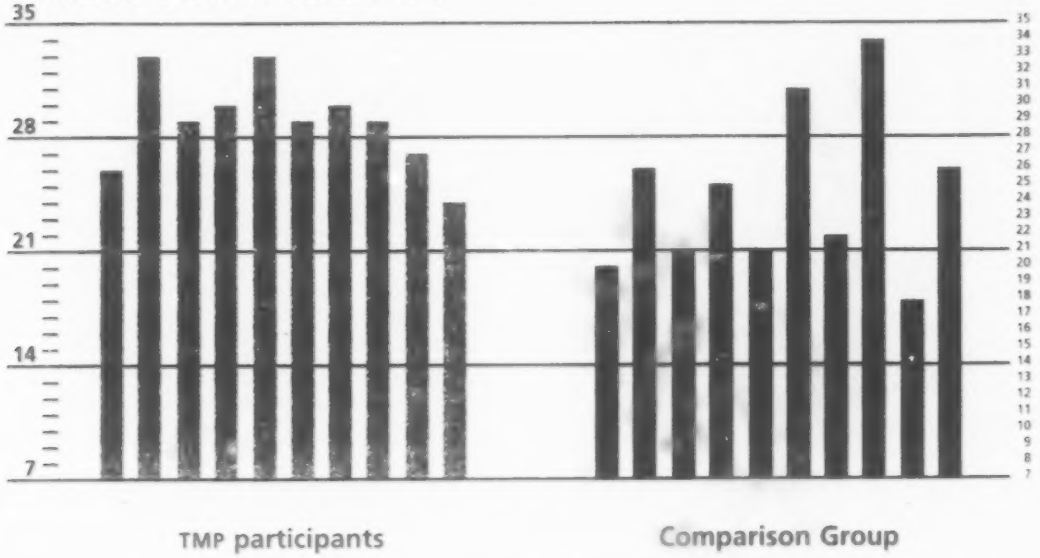
The difference between the scores on the Alienation scale is also significant.

TABLE 5.2: SCORES FOR I–E LOCUS OF CONTROL, ASSERTIVENESS AND ALIENATION

| | TMP Participants N=10 | | | Comparison group N=10 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | range | mean | SD | range | mean | SD | p |
| I–E locus of control | 24–33 | 29.0 | 2.68 | 18–34 | 24.4 | 4.80 | .05 |
| Assertiveness | 22–30 | 26.9 | 2.55 | 20–28 | 25.4 | 2.80 | n.s. |
| Alienation | 7–17 | 12.6 | 3.58 | 9–21 | 16.1 | 3.53 | .05 |

Notes to table 5.2: SD = Standard Deviation, n.s. = not significant

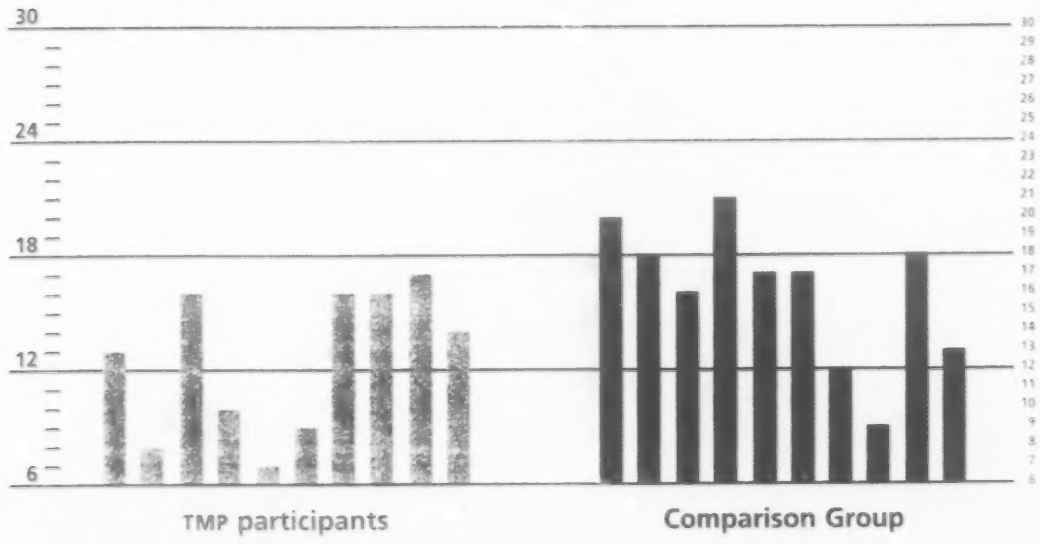
FIGURE 5.1: SCORES FOR TMP AND THE COMPARISON GROUP PARTICIPANTS ON THE I–E LOCUS OF CONTROL SCALE




Note to figure 5.1: The possible response range for the I-E LOC Scale is 7–35, with a higher score indicating a greater sense of control.



FIGURE 5.2: SCORES FOR TMP AND THE COMPARISON GROUP PARTICIPANTS ON THE ALIENATION SCALE




Note to figure 5.2: The possible response range for the Alienation Scale is 30 to 6, with a lower score indicating a lower sense of alienation.

Figure 5.2 plots the scores for both groups on the Alienation scale. Whereas no member of the TMP group exceeded 18 on that scale, two comparison group mothers exceeded it and another four were at or very close to it. (A score of 18 or more indicates a considerable level of alienation and is a cause for concern).

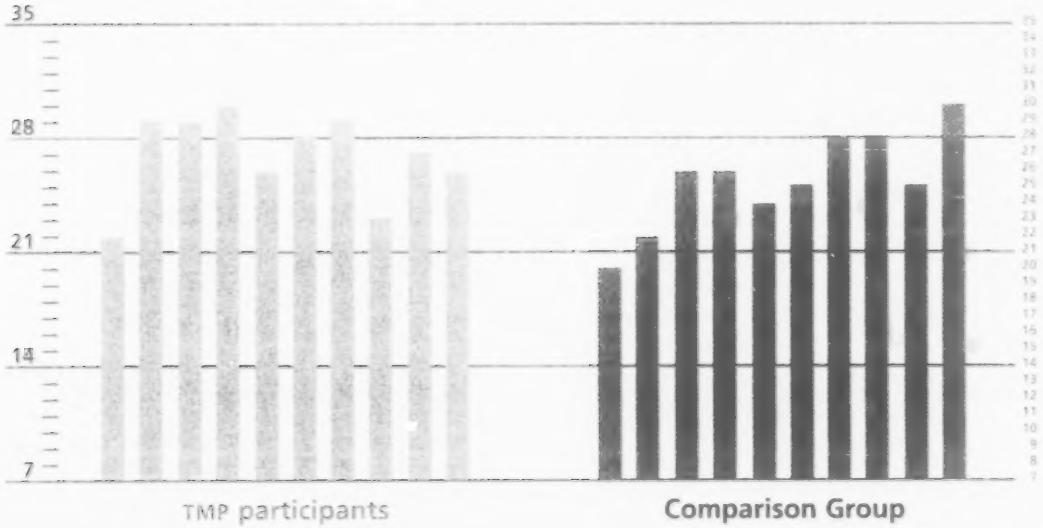
This means that comparison group members are more likely than women in the TMP group to feel misunderstood, have little sense of direction in life, feel unappreciated for who they are and may be inclined to violent reactions or responses if annoyed.

The difference between the scores on the Assertiveness scale (which are plotted in Figure 5.3) is not as marked, but is nevertheless higher for the TMP group than their non-TMP peers. This higher score suggests that the TMP mothers are more inclined to stand up for themselves, to express their emotions freely and are less inclined to let themselves be manipulated by others than the comparison group members.

In summary, the findings of the LOC and Alienation scales are unequivocal in confirming distinct differences on these variables between the TMP and comparison groups. The findings confirm that attitudinally, the TMP mothers are better equipped for dealing with the challenges of their lives and experiences than are the comparison group participants.



FIGURE 5.3: SCORES FOR TMP AND THE COMPARISON GROUP PARTICIPANTS ON THE ASSERTIVENESS SCALE




Note to figure 5.3: The possible response range for the Assertiveness Scale is 7-35, with a higher score indicating higher assertiveness.

## Findings of research questions (children)

The study should have explored the lives of 20 youngsters, 10 to 13 years of age, who were born between 1986 and 1989. It in fact looked at children ranging in age from 8 months to 15 years. Eighteen of the children fell within the range of 9 to 13 years, but two – little Paprika, baby son of TMP participant #4, Daisy, and 15 year old Oregano, son of comparison group member #3, Hyacinth – were outside the expected age range. Although Paprika was not old enough to be interviewed, his presence was considered significant because he is Daisy's only living child, born 10 years after she lost her first son at birth. Hyacinth had been included in the comparison group because of the birth of a daughter in the period between 1986 and 1989, when Hyacinth was 15. It is suspected that Hyacinth may have misled hospital staff into thinking that this child was her first. In fact, Oregano was Hyacinth's first child, born when Hyacinth was 12.

***How have the TMP children developed?***
***Are they well adjusted children, socially and emotionally?***
***Do they display behaviour that is noticeably different from that of their comparison group peers?***

Despite initial efforts to see whether the height and weight of the children varied between both groups, it soon became apparent that physical well-being was not a problem with either TMP or comparison group children. They came in all sizes and shapes – some very slim, some plump, some tall as their parents and others small and chubby – depending on which parent's body type they seemed to have inherited.

Cayenne (CG #4) had been in a major accident in 1998 and suffered brain damage, causing him to be placed in a special school as a result. He was the only child who did not seem to be in satisfactory physical condition. Across and within both groups, reasons given for doctor's visits, in the absence of medical opinion, seemed to be for the normal complaints of children in their age group: fever, hair fungus, ringworm, cut finger, vomiting, nose bleed, flu, belly pain (stomach ache). Only circumcision for Thyme (CG #2) seemed somewhat late, as this is usually performed shortly after birth.



In general, it could also be said that the social and emotional development of both groups of children was within normal limits for their age. The only noticeable exceptions across the two groups were Saffron (CG #6), who expressed envy and malice because she was not permitted to live with her mother and her four step-siblings in Clarendon; Cocoa (TMP #8), who seemed to suffer from low self-esteem; and Oregano (CG #3), who had a highly inflated ego.

In the teacher interviews, apart from the major concerns expressed about

Almond's (TMP #2) adjustment to High School and Saffron's (CG #6) precocious behaviour, there were no reports of maladjustment or major behavioural difficulties in either group. Cayenne's (CG #4) situation in his new school may well be the reason for his tendency to disturb the other children in his class, all of whom have disabilities that are far greater than his own.

Children from both groups gave long lists of friends at home and at school with whom they enjoyed playing and talking. The children in more rural areas, such as Bay Leaf (TMP child #6), spoke less of watching television soap operas than did their urban peers and more of *picking starapples, sweetsops and mangoes* from the trees where they lived. Games played went the full gamut of hide-and-seek, playing school, football, and some video games. Reading as a pastime was mentioned across both groups.



There was a definite sense from the TMP children, however, that the importance of academic study was stressed by most of their mothers:

Capsicum, TMP #10: [She tells me]

*I should take up my books and read more. I must work harder at school.*

No TMP child had the experience found with Nutmeg (CG #1), whose mother had advised me that Nutmeg had been attending a specific Primary School at the time of the interview in February. However, Nutmeg's teacher had not seen him since the start of the year and thought he had gone to attend another school.

***Do they live with their mothers? Is mother the principal care provider? What is the nature of their relationship with their mothers? Does their mother influence their lives?***

In both TMP and comparison groups, eight out of 10 children were living with their mother. Of the two TMP children who are not living with their mother, Bay Leaf (TMP #6) will be living abroad with his mother in future, and Vanilla (TMP #7) lives in the United States with her father's family. In the comparison group, Thyme (CG#2) lives with his stepmother whilst his father is in the United States, and Saffron (CG #6) lives with her great-grandmother in Portland.

Despite the living arrangements, however, the responses of the children to the question, 'Who looks after you the most?' varied. In the TMP group, Pimento (TMP #5) said that the helper 'Rosie' looked after him the most; Bay Leaf (TMP #6) said his grandmother, with whom he lives during the week, looked after him the most; Vanilla (TMP #7), living in the USA, said her grandmother 'Mildred'; and Cocoa (TMP #8) indicated, *Mummy and sometimes Daddy.*

In the comparison group, Capsicum (CG#10), who lives on the same compound as his mother, said his grandmother looked after him most. Rosemary (CG #5) and Fevergrass (CG #8) both live with their mothers but claimed that their fathers gave them more care.

Mother-child relationships also varied across both groups. Qualitative differences in the nature of the mother-child relationship could also be discerned in the statements that the children made about their mothers, although in many instances for both groups, expressions of feelings were very restricted and often focused on the mother's disciplinary behaviour. Almond (TMP #2) said, [Her mother] *is always there for me. She's nice and good. She takes care of me.* Bay Leaf (TMP #6) said, [She] *likes to make me happy....*[she is] *kind, loves me and loves to bite me on my ears and nose... I am proud of her.*

Among the comparison group children, Fevergrass (CG #8) said that despite her mother being good and caring, she *gets licks* if she misbehaves. Nutmeg (CG #1) described his mother's feelings for him as, *She likes me*, and his feelings, *I love him.*

There were, however, statements and examples on both sides that indicated loving, yet firm, relationships with mothers.

The extent to which their mothers influence their lives was most starkly portrayed by the four children – two in each group – who do not live with their mothers and who are not under her direct influence. Bay Leaf (TMP #6) expressed very warm feelings for his mother and tremendously enjoys her affection for him. Vanilla (TMP #7) expressed the desire to be a Police Officer like her mother, although she has lived away from her since she was four years of age.

In the comparison group, Saffron (CG #6) is angry and upset that she has to live away from her mother and expresses little delight with her four step-siblings. Thyme (CG #2), who lives with his stepmother but visits his mother Lilac from time to time, says of that arrangement: *It's okay ... sometimes.*



In summary, mother–child relationships, as far as one interview by the researcher could reveal, were as varied across as within TMP and comparison groups. Some mothers and children seemed to have a warmer connection than others, but the researcher could not specify that this difference was more or less noticeable among either group. Dahlia's (TMP #8) scathing criticism of her lovely daughter Cocoa, despite an excellent school report, was of as great concern as Petunia's (CG #6) love to have her children around her, yet seeming lack of awareness of her daughter's sexual activity at 12 years of age.

What was noticeably different between the two groups was the emphasis TMP

mothers placed on their child's schooling, and their hopes and aspirations for their children, including the strong sense that they would not allow their children to repeat their own mistakes. This statement could only be made about one comparison group member, Zinnia (CG #8).

***Has the marked difference noted in the early research between the children exposed to the TMP daycare programme and the comparison group babies been sustained? Now pre-teens, some entering Secondary School and All Age School, how have they been performing in school?***

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In 1989 the Teenage Mothers Project commenced a three-year research study to compare the abilities of TMP children with a control group of children who had been matched at birth through the May Pen Hospital, using the McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities (MCSA ). The report concluded with the finding that the MCSA testing revealed that the children under TMP care not only did much better than the control children, but were performing well by any standard. (A summary of the earlier research is in Appendix Three)

An important objective of the Tracer study has been to determine the extent to which this early developmental difference may have been sustained, given the natural impact of environment, schooling and the fact that the TMP children would have left the TMP environment when they were aged 3 or 4 years, despite occasional home visits that continued afterwards.

The principal instrument used to assess whether the difference has been sustained was the School Performance Report, which comprised the final page of the children's questionnaire and which was completed in the interview with each child's teacher. Eighteen of these reports were completed. The two that were not completed were for Paprika (TMP #4), the infant, and Vanilla (TMP #7), whose school in Florida had not returned her form. To some extent, the reports cannot be said to have the standardised base of a research instrument because different teachers could have given different values to the questions and assessments. However, teacher responses are considered a valuable component of the MCSA research, and as a result their use in this study has validity.

The teachers were all asked to score their student's academic achievement on the basis of a scale from 5 to 1, where 5 is 'excellent' and 1 is 'weak'. The results are presented in Table 5.3.

The difference between the scores for the TMP children and the comparison group is significant at p=.05 and confirms the findings of the MCSA testing. In fact, it says more: not only did the early stimulation programme component of

TABLE 5.3: FIGURES OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT SCORES

| | TMP Participants N=8 | | | Comparison group N=10 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | range | mean | SD | range | mean | SD | p |
| academic achievement scores | 1–5 | 3.25 | 1.09 | 1–4 | 2.1 | 0.83 | .05 |

Notes to table 5.3: SD = Standard Deviation

the TMP daycare put the babies ahead of their peers developmentally, but this superior performance has been sustained to the upper levels of Primary and All Age schooling. Mention must be made, however, of Almond (TMP #2) who had the lowest TMP score of all. Almond is the only child in her first year of High School, and her teacher's report showed great concern about how Almond was settling into High School.

Special note must be taken of the fact that at this stage in schooling in Jamaica, young adolescent males are known to 'fall off' in their performance when compared to girls. However, there is no difference in the performance of the four TMP boys in the sample when compared to the girls, which is remarkable!

Teacher interviews for several of the children revealed emerging leadership skills as well as outstanding language abilities (even if this sometimes presents a problem for a teacher in a class of 50+ who says the student *chats too much*):

- *She is very articulate, speaks well. She displays leadership skills, but tends to chat.* (Teacher of Ginger, TMP #1)
- *She has leadership skills. She can be depended on to organise the class.* (Teacher of Cinnamon, TMP #3)
- *He writes and reads well. Maths and Language are good also.* (Teacher of Basil, TMP #9)
- *I think she is dramatic and she loves to sing and dance. She is outspoken.* (Teacher of Cocoa, TMP #8)

There were also children in the comparison group with satisfactory performances. Fevergrass (CG #8) and Saffron (CG#6) both received good reports. However, in two cases, teachers could identify nothing outstanding about the student. In addition, the teachers of other students said:

- *She is inclined to provoke other children. She does not settle to her work.* (said of Chamomile, CG #7)

- *He keeps on hitting and fighting the other children.* (said of Cayenne, CG #4, who suffered an accident the previous year)

- *He hardly made one know he was in class.* (said of Nutmeg, CG #1, who had dropped out of school)

The MCSA report of 1995 refers to the rigid context of the traditional classroom as having a negative impact on TMP children (and, no doubt, all children). This negative impact can only have been diminished by the strong developmental base the children received in the early stimulation programme and by the continuing influence of one other variable – the mother. The single variable that would have continued to influence the TMP child and enable good to excellent academic achievement in all cases but one, would have been the TMP mother, doubtless encouraging, insisting and motivating her child to perform well in school, to read, to attend school regularly. Apart from the early stimulation programme intervention, no variable can have created such a marked impact and contrast to the comparison group's academic performance as that of the TMP mother herself.

29 In the following discussion, 'comparison group' is abbreviated 'CG'.

30 'Labour force survey, 1996' in ***Pocket book of statistics*** 1997; Statistical Institute of Jamaica.

31 Teen Mothers Project (1995) ***Teens' children: Charting their progress through research***, Centre for Early Childhood Education, UWI (Mona), Kingston, and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, The Hague.

Bernard van Leer Foundation

# Chapter six

# Conclusions and recommendations

The aims of the Teenage Mothers Project over the 10-year period between 1986 and 1996 were to:

- decrease the number and frequency of teenage pregnancies in and around Clarendon;
- address the development and training of the teenage mother;
- lessen the likelihood of repeat pregnancies, thereby improving the life chances of the young child.

The staff, participants and donors of the TMP project can hold their heads high for having achieved these objectives so far as the young mothers are concerned. This research has shown that the sample of 10 TMP mothers:

- all pursued further education and training;
- are all employed;
- all improved the life chances of their children through the reduction of repeat pregnancies by more than 50 percent, when compared to their non-project peers.

The recommendations for the project and for similar programmes must emerge from the practices, small and large, that were the fabric and substance of the Teenage Mothers Project, which enabled it to have the major impact it has had.

## What practices are strongly recommended to continue to be part of any project with similar objectives?

### Small group counselling and discussion sessions

*It is recommended that similar programmes incorporate trained guidance counsellors in small group sessions, and that absolute confidentiality of information shared should be stressed.*



TMP participants repeatedly mentioned the value of the Big Sisters Club in which small group counselling sessions were conducted by TMP staff. Opportunities to share personal problems, experiences and needs with peers and an adult counsellor appears to have had a major impact on many participants.

### The early stimulation and care programme for babies

*It is unequivocally recommended that similar programmes have trained caregivers providing early stimulation to the babies, and that the mothers of the babies should be trained in childcare and early stimulation. The impact of such an intervention is sustained throughout the children's adolescence and probably their entire lives.*

*An important additional recommendation is that caregivers in similar programmes should be sensitised to the emotional needs of the young mothers and give supportive and encouraging feedback to them rather than negative comments that could suggest that the young mothers may be unable to give their children proper care.*

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, daycare – with a specific programme of early stimulation provided by trained caregivers – was provided for the babies of TMP participants. This aspect of the programme met with a warm reception from the mothers because they could continue their studies – *maintain their youthfulness* – whilst their babies were receiving the best care. It was also revealed in the McCarthy research to have been a major contributor to the overall development of the children. One TMP mother, who has produced another child who has not had the benefit of the programme, questioned whether the older brother is not a brighter child as a direct result of the early stimulation programme. The school performance reports have endorsed this earlier finding, with 18 different teachers reflecting the above-average to excellent performance of the TMP children when compared to their peers.



## The high standard of nutrition

*It is recommended that all such projects stress the importance of diet and sound nutrition as an important aspect of the health of the mothers and their children, and provide it whenever necessary.*

In a country where food can be very expensive and high inflation has beset the economy for more than the last decade, a programme that recognises and places importance on the nutrition of its participants – both mother and child – is extremely valuable. But the TMP project went further. Not only were mothers taught how to prepare nutritious, yet low-cost, local foods for their babies, but when mothers moved away to study in Kingston, for example, grandparents were taught as well. Furthermore, in instances when the mother might not have been at home to ensure that the babies were properly fed, food was often sent home on weekends. In this way, the family was able to provide the quality of meal that the TMP would have provided. This kind of attention to diet and nutrition continued for the entire time the babies attended the TMP – up to the age of three or four years.

## The encouragement that teachers gave to the participants

*It is recommended that quality staff – who provide support and encouragement to the young mothers in the programme – continue to be employed in such programmes because of the impact on the young mothers, many of whom remember words and acts of kindness in detail, despite the passage of years.*

Teenage mothers in Jamaica – despite much evidence that their pregnancies resulted from ignorance of the facts of life – are nevertheless faced with negative reactions and derision from their families, friends and communities for having gotten caught. The encouragement that staff in the TMP education programme gave to the young and expectant mothers seems to have acted as balm for their sad spirits.

## The bonding of mother and child

*It is recommended that efforts to nurture the bonding of mother and child from birth be a major thrust of similar programmes.*

The negative impact on the self-esteem of children who are not directly raised by their mothers, at least in the first six years of life, is well documented in child development research. The TMP staff had to counter the attempts of many teenage mothers who wished to send their babies away from public view to be brought up by some distant family member. It is strongly believed that this effort to ensure a strong mother-child bond has been a major contributor to the growth and development of TMP children.

## Parenting and family life education

*It is strongly recommended that a national campaign be developed to encourage parents to take responsibility for learning the true facts about conception (amazing myths still abound in this area) and explaining them to their children.*

The frequency with which the researcher was told by TMP participants and comparison group members alike that they had not been told the facts of life by their mothers or anyone else was alarming. There is presently a programme of Adolescent Upliftment being funded by donor agencies to address this need. This is to be commended, but at the same time, a campaign – similar to that launched by the Government of Jamaica to reduce repeat pregnancies with the slogan 'Two (children) is better than too many' – could be developed to encourage Jamaican parents to tell their children the facts of life.



There is a delightful description of what one TMP participant (#10), who had her son when she was 12 years old, told him in relation to the facts of life. Unlike her mother, she has undertaken to explain the facts of life to her younger siblings, feeling strongly that ignorance of these facts was a major contributor to her early pregnancy. She has discussed menstruation, contraception and sexual intercourse with them and has warned her 12 year old son that if he:

*fools around with the girls and gets one of them pregnant, he will have to leave school early and work to look after the baby.*

## The involvement of fathers

*The recommendation for similar projects is that depending on the nature of the relationship with the mother, fathers should be involved at an early stage in the process. However, in the event that the circumstances of conception are obviously those of the act of rape, with the support of the victim and her family, the agency should refer the family to the relevant authorities to ensure that the rapist is brought to justice.*

The issue of involving the father is a complex one. The position of the TMP staff was understandably that the participant should recognise that she had made an error in becoming pregnant so early. But what of the father's error? Former TMP staff report that in most cases, every effort was made to contact the fathers and to involve them in the growth, development and financial support of their children. What was not encouraged by the TMP was cohabitation with the father, and when cases of rape were identified, the family was referred to the relevant authorities. The Rural Family Support Organization (RuFamSo), a development of the TMP, has implemented a young fathers project, which is to be commended.

In this study there was considerable evidence that the majority of TMP participants were in touch with the fathers of their children. In one case, the father has become the husband, and in other cases, the fathers have undertaken the care and responsibility of their children, locally and overseas. The situation becomes more complex, however, when there are instances in which the mothers may have been victims of rape, but were not sufficiently cognizant of what constitutes rape or capable of initiating action. In one instance, a TMP participant who is now a police officer stated that if she had known at the time what she knows about rape now, the father of her child could have been charged with rape. Yet the father later offered to undertake total care of their child, who now lives with her paternal grandmother in the United States. In such instances, one must wonder whether some fathers might have welcomed the opportunity to become part of their child's life so as to avoid a court case and prison sentence.

## Attitude of hospital staff to young mothers and their babies

*It is strongly recommended that the Ministry of Health advise its hospital personnel in maternity and child care to give young mothers the same quality of care that they provide to other mothers.*

Whilst the evidence on this issue is sketchy and was in no way the focus of this research, there is a sense that the teenage mother is at a distinct disadvantage when she has her baby within the current system of hospital care, certainly in Clarendon. The

mothers who had lost babies at birth – and there were three such cases in the total sample – all indicated that it was their opinion that there was negligence in the care of their child.

### Project publicity

*It is recommended that a small sum be identified so that a professional publicity campaign can be implemented to show the people of Clarendon, and Jamaica as a whole, what has been happening very quietly and very effectively in their midst since 1986.*

The only regret that the researcher feels at the conclusion of this project is the realisation that the tremendous impact of this project on 500 women in Clarendon is scarcely known and little mentioned. In a country that needs such projects in every parish, the success, impact and value of such a project should be shouted from the mountaintops.

### The project leadership

*It is recommended that the commitment and stability provided by the original four project leaders, and the importance of this commitment, be recognised.*

Discussions with the original project leadership – Joyce Jarrett, Utealia Burrell, Yvonne Osborne and Eda Golding – all of whom still work with RuFamSo reveals the extent to which these persons not only did their jobs with a degree of loyalty, dedication and excellence beyond the call of duty, but how much they made the success of the project a part of their lives. When participants went astray – and many of them did at times – late night hospital visits, lending money that could never be recouped, using their influence to obtain jobs and places in college for participants, and sometimes demonstrating 'tough love' (in short, 'mothering' the participants) can never be captured adequately in writing, nor seen on brief visits by overseas donors to the project. Having lived, as a researcher, with this project for 10 months, I close with the recommendation that the incredible contribution of these four 'mothers' to the TMP project be recognised.

# Appendix one

***Report on the Focus Group Session held July 1999 at Devon House, Hope Road, Kingston, Jamaica***

The Focus Group Session was attended by eight of the 10 TMP participants (Chrysanthemum, TMP #9, was absent because she had just come out of hospital, and Poinsettia, TMP #2, could only attend for a short time), and lasted approximately one and a half hours. The participants broke into two groups of four each. They discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the project and sought to answer the following questions:



- What, if any, are the critical success factors of the Teenage Mothers Project?
- What should similar projects modify and change in order to achieve greater effectiveness in the future?

The combined feedback of both groups follows:

***What, if any, are the critical success factors of the Teenage Mothers Project?***

Participants reconfirmed that the features of the TMP that made it successful were:

- the help that it provided in enabling teenage mothers *to put their lives back together;*
- the help it provided in enabling the young mothers to take better care of their children;
- the guidance it gave in everyday living;
- preparation for the *outer, unfriendly* world.

In the participants' view, the project:

- enabled the mothers to *maintain their youthfulness* by providing them with the opportunity to continue academic study, complete High School and participate in physical education, sports and athletics;
- kept the focus of the participants positive;
- built the self–esteem of the participants;
- gave the participants new hope.

The most influential and effective aspects of the programme were:

- the Big Sisters Club, in which small group counselling sessions were held with TMP teachers;
- the early stimulation and care provided for the babies;
- the nutritious food provided for all;



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- the rap sessions held with the participants' peers;

- the encouragement that the teachers gave to participants.

***What should similar projects modify and change to achieve greater effectiveness in the future?***

Suggestions for modification or improvements to the programme included:

- ensuring that the confidentiality of the counselling relationship is stressed and understood by all staff (there were instances in which confidences shared with staff by participants were discussed with other staff members);

- training the daycare givers about their own attitudes toward the teenage mothers of the babies they were caring for (in some cases, participants were made to feel inferior, were negatively compared to other participants and were exposed to embarrassing reprimands).

# Appendix two

***Teenage Mothers Project,***
***Clarendon, Jamaica***
***Tracer study questionnaire** – mothers*

## Bio-data

1. Name
2. Address

Tel
Fax

3. Did you attend the Teenage Mothers Project?
   ❑ Yes ❑ No
   If yes, in which year did you start attending?



4. What age were you when you had your first child?

5. What age are you now?

6. How many children do you have?
   Boys Girls
   Age range from to yrs

## Schooling

7. What school were you attending when you became pregnant?

8. For how many years did you attend school?

9. For what reason(s) did you leave this school?
   ❑ Completed studies/Received school leaving certificate
   ❑ Became pregnant and dropped out
   ❑ Just dropped out
   ❑ Had no money to continue
   ❑ Was told not to return to school/expelled
   ❑ Other reasons

10. What was your highest level of qualification/certification on leaving school?

    What is your highest level of qualification currently?

## Religious affiliation

11. What is your religious denomination/affiliation?

    For how many years have you been a member?

## Further education

12. What further education or training have you pursued since leaving school?

## Employment & economic status

13. Have you ever been employed since leaving school?
    ❑ Yes ❑ No

(a) Are you currently employed or working?
    ❑ Yes ❑ No

(b) If yes, where are you employed/ working?

    What is your position?

(c) Are you able to live on what you earn?
    ❑ Yes ❑ No

(d) If no, do you get financial support from anyone?
    ❑ Yes ❑ No

(e) Are you able to provide for your child also?
    ❑ Yes ❑ No

(f) If no, what are the reasons for your unemployment?

## Domicile and family relations

14. With whom were you living when you became pregnant the first time?

❑ Mother
❑ Grandmother
❑ Father
❑ Stepfather
❑ Older Sibling
❑ Boyfriend / Baby Father
❑ Extended Family
❑ Other

15. Do you now live at the same address that you were living when you became pregnant the first time?
    ❑ Yes ❑ No

16. Does your child/do your children live with you?
Explain:
(a) If no, when did you/they leave?
(b) Why did you/they leave

17. Do you currently reside with anyone?
Explain:

18. Do you live with the father of any of your children?
    ❑ Yes ❑ No

(a) If yes, how many years have you been living with him?
(b) If no, please explain why not?

## Mother–child relationship

19. Who takes care of your child/ children most of the time?

❑ Mother
❑ Child's father
❑ Grandmother
❑ Grandfather
❑ Father's family
❑ Helper
❑ Other

20. Are you happy with the arrangement? Give reasons

21. Have you at any time considered giving up your child/any of your children for adoption?
❑ Yes ❑ No

If yes, explain why?

If no, explain why?

22. Describe the way you feel about your first child. Are you satisfied with the relationship that you have?

23. What has been the most difficult part of being a mother?



24. What has been the most satisfying part of being a mother?

25. How many children in all would you like to have?

26. Did you deliberately become pregnant with your first child?
❑ Yes ❑ No
If yes, why?

## Personal attitudes

27. Do you now regret having had a child when you did?
❑ Yes ❑ No

28. Did any of your younger siblings become teenage parents?
❑ Yes ❑ No

29. Describe how you felt about yourself when you became pregnant?

30. How do you feel about yourself now?

31. Did your mother discuss menstruation, contraception or sexual intercourse with you before you became pregnant?
❑ Yes ❑ No

32. Will you explain menstruation, contraception and sexual intercourse to your child?
❑ Yes ❑ No

33. What plans have you for your future and that of your child/children?

### Community participation

34. Do you assist in your community in any way? (i.e., sports, youth, church clubs, etc.)
    ❑ Yes ❑ No

(a) If yes, explain

(b) If no, explain

35. Were you assisted at any time during or after your first pregnancy by any individual, group or organization?
    ❑ Yes ❑ No

(a) If yes, explain

## The TMP experience

For former TMP participants only

36. Describe your feelings about having participated in the TMP?

37. What impact has the TMP had on your life?

38. What 3 aspects of the TMP did you find most helpful? (Prioritise)

39. Any other comments?

### For all subjects

**The following statements express the way that some people may feel about themselves. Please respond to the statements on the basis of how YOU feel.**



SA = Strongly Agree;
A = Agree;
U = Uncertain;
D = Disagree;
SD = Strongly Disagree

| | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I feel powerless to change the things that happen to me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I feel confident to cope with problems which may arise | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. I feel that I can influence the way people behave | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. In difficult situations I look to others to tell me what to do | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I have confidence in my ability to make my own decisions | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. I tend to do what others expect so they won't disapprove of me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I tend to blame others for my own mistakes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. If I am in the right, I will stand up for myself at all times | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. I hate to enter a room full of strangers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I am quite comfortable speaking about my feelings and emotions | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. I sometimes feel as if others use me for their own purposes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I have a great deal to contribute to Jamaican society | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. I hate to stand out in a crowd | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Whenever people think me different, I do not mind. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. My life has no sense of direction | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. I usually feel loved and wanted | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Few people seem to like me for who I am | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. If someone strikes me, I strike back | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. Nobody seems to understand me | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. I am very fond of people of all ages | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

***Teenage Mothers Project, Clarendon, Jamaica***
***Tracer study questionnaire–Children***

Bio-data

1. Name
2. Address

Tel
Fax

3. Mother's Name

4. Mother's Address (if different to above)

5. Father's Name

6. Date of Birth
   Age yrs months

7. Schools attended/dates

8. Current grade/level in school

9. Have you taken the Common Entrance?
   ❑ Yes Passed ❑ No Passed

10. Height Weight

11. How many times in the last year have you been to the doctor/clinic

(a) Why?

(b) Who took you?

12. Have you received your shots (vaccines)?
    ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Some

Child–mother relationship

13. Who looks after you the most?

14. What do you call that person?

15. How long have you lived with your mother?
    ❑ Always ❑ On and Off ❑ Never

16. How do you feel about this? (i.e., answer to 15)

17. If I asked your Mummy to tell me all about you, tell me some of the things that she would say

18. Now, you describe your mummy to me. Tell me how you feel about her.

## Sibling relations

19. Do you have any brothers and sisters?

❑ Yes ❑ No

(a) If yes, how many boys? girls?

Boys Girls

(b) What are the ages of the boys ?

Age range from to yrs

What are the ages of the girls ?

Age range from to yrs

(c) Do they have the same mummy and daddy as you do?

(d) Tell me how you get along with your brothers and sisters?

## Social/school relations

20. Tell me about whom you like to play with where you live.

21. Tell me about whom you like to talk to where you live.

22. What kinds of things do you like to do when you are not in school?

23. Whom do you like to play with at your school?

24. Whom do you like to talk to at your school?

25. How would your favourite teacher describe your school work?

26. What would a teacher that you do not like tell me about you?

27. Who or what would you most like to be when you grow up and why?

***Teenage Mothers Project, Clarendon, Jamaica***
*Teachers' questionnaire*

School performance report for

1. Name of School

2. Address

3. Name of Teacher/Principal reporting

4. For how many years have you taught this student?

5. How would you rate this student in their academic achievement on the basis of 5 being 'excellent' and 1 being 'weak' ?

   excellent weak
   5 4 3 2 1

6. Is there any particular skill, competence or behaviour that stands out in your mind as relates to this student?

7. How would you classify the overall performance of this student when compared to his/her peers.
   Excellent / Above Average / Average / Weak

8. Does this student get on with other students?
   ❑ Yes ❑ No

9. Does this student have a behaviour problem?
   ❑ Yes ❑ No
   If yes, explain

# Appendix three

**Summary of previous research**[32]

From the beginning, the TMP was designed with the idea of research in mind. The daycare programme was specifically structured to facilitate the collection of empirical data to support a longitudinal study. It was hoped that information on such issues as the relationship between early upbringing and later schooling could be collected.

As part of the research focus of the TMP, a control group of babies born to teenage mothers was constructed. The control babies were located through hospitals and clinics in the area and matched on the basis of the mother's socio-economic background. The mothers in the control group were not involved in the testing and were not aware that their babies were part of the study.

APPENDIX TABLE 3.1: 1989–91 MSCA SCORES



| Scale | Year | TMP | Control |
|---|---|---|---|
| Verbal | 1989 | 51.23 | 43.23 |
| | 1990 | 52.15 | 46.85 |
| | 1991 | 66.23 | 52.77 |
| Mean | | *56.54* | *47.62* |
| Perceptual Performance | 1989 | 44.00 | 44.08 |
| | 1990 | 51.00 | 50.31 |
| | 1991 | 62.62 | 54.00 |
| Mean | | *52.54* | *49.46* |
| Quantitative | 1989 | 48.31 | 35.62 |
| | 1990 | 45.69 | 44.46 |
| | 1991 | 49.08 | 41.15 |
| Mean | | *47.69* | *40.41* |
| Memory | 1989 | 53.08 | 38.54 |
| | 1990 | 47.38 | 44.85 |
| | 1991 | 51.38 | 42.77 |
| Mean | | *50.61* | *42.05* |
| Motor | 1989 | 50.31 | 48.00 |
| | 1990 | 50.00 | 51.38 |
| | 1991 | 61.15 | 56.77 |
| Mean | | *53.82* | *52.05* |

The children were measured using the McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities (MSCA), which has separate tests designed for children from 2.5 to 8.5 years of age. The initial set of tests were administered in 1989, 1990, and 1991. All of the children from both the TMP and control groups were located and tested for all three of these tests. In 1995, the original group of TMP children was located and tested again. This time they were compared to their peers in general rather than to a specific control group. The TMP children were found to perform better than the other children: They performed well – in the words of the report – *not only in comparison with the control group, but by any standard.* Appendix table 3.1 shows the scores for each MSCA scale for each year.

Despite the fact that the MSCA is not standardized to Jamaican culture, in 1991 the TMP group was equal to or better than US norms in four of the five primary scales.

A qualitative evaluation was carried out in 1995 as a follow-up to the earlier studies. In this study, information from school report cards was collected and the children's teachers were interviewed.

Teachers were asked to assess the children in several areas: how they performed in comparison with peers, how they performed in different settings, and how they performed in specific areas (verbal, social, memory, etc.).

Again, the TMP children were performing at levels that were above average when compared to their peers. The conclusion of the 1995 study was that

*The MSCA profiles and the more recent research together present a rounded picture of the effect of the TMP day care experience on children. The first heartening aspect of this picture ... is the sustainability of the gains, which survive even several years after entrance into the traditional educational system. ... the strong interest and high motivation levels of the TMP children suggest that the benefits of the experience are more than just intellectual, that they affect other personality traits as well. Based on the overall picture presented, one may be justified in believing that the seeds of hope for breaking the cycle of generations of teenage pregnancy have been sown in the TMP day care programme.*



32 This summary is based on TMP (1995) Teen's children: ***Charting their progress through research***, Centre for Early Childhood Education, UWI (Mona), Kingston, and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, The Hague.

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These are available from:

Centre for Early Childhood Education
University of the West Indies
Mona, Kingston
Jamaica

# Photographs

pages 4,14, 26, 56:
Roving Caregivers Project; photographer Colin Reid.

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pages 11, 18, 100:
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In the Parish of Clarendon in Jamaica about one in every 10 babies is born to a teenage mother – many of them between 12 and 15 years old. Few of these babies have a chance of achieving their full potential, but between 1986 and 1996, some 500 young mothers and their children were given that chance through their participation in the Teenage Mothers Programme (TMP).

The TMP took an all-embracing approach that encompassed the development of the young women, stimulation and care for the babies, support in the home and contacts with the babies' fathers. Ten of the mothers who had participated in the early years of the TMP were traced in 1999, and they and their children were interviewed, as were a matched comparison group of another 10 mothers and children who had not been in the programme.

This absorbing report of the findings gives us an insight into the lives of these 20 families and provides solid evidence of the very positive effects of the TMP. All the former programme mothers are employed, most have undertaken post-school training and their children are mostly ranked above average by their teachers. By contrast, the comparison group's employment rate is much lower and their children are mostly ranked below average to average by their teachers. The mothers in the comparison group have given birth to more than twice as many babies than the programme group over the same period.

The report shows how 'a new door opened' for former participants in developing their resilience following the birth of their first child and arresting a negative life trend. The study also supports the position that interventions that promote parenting education, strong mother-child bonding and early stimulation can have long term positive developmental impact on the child aged 0-3 years.